

A SHORT  
LIFE OF  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

RALPH SHIRLEY

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A SHORT LIFE OF  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN







LINCOLN AS HE APPEARED DURING THE DEBATE  
WITH DOUGLAS

*Frontispiece.*

# A SHORT LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BY THE HON.

RALPH SHIRLEY

AUTHOR OF "THE NEW GOD, AND OTHER ESSAYS,"  
"PROPHECIES AND OMENS OF THE GREAT WAR,"  
ETC.

WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS

*"Only the actions of the just  
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust."*

LONDON  
WILLIAM RIDER & SON, LIMITED  
8 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C. 4

1919

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## FOREWORD

THE revived interest in President Abraham Lincoln, evoked in the main through the numerous Press references to his political career during the recent Great War, seems to offer a favourable opportunity for a short popular study of his life and work. Needless to say, such a study makes no claim to original research, the material for the Life of the great American President which is already accessible being, indeed, most voluminous, and the difficulty being rather to know what to omit. The aim of the present volume is to give, in as concise a form as possible, the story of Lincoln's life and the part played by him in connection with the maintenance of the American Union and the suppression of Slavery on the American Continent. Of recent literature on the subject, I would acknowledge a special debt to the very impartial and painstaking study of Lincoln's policy and place in history which has been written for the *Makers of the Nineteenth Century Series* by Lord Charnwood.

RALPH SHIRLEY.



# LIFE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

## CHAPTER I

### CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

OF the world's great men, surely the greatest are those who have made history ; that is to say, those who, by their personal action, have turned the current of events in such a manner that the subsequent history of the world has been radically changed by their intervention in the course of affairs. Among such men we may name without hesitation Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and in our own times Otto von Bismarck. Owing to the individual action of each of these three men, who may be selected as typical instances, the current of history was radically altered from what it would have been if they had played no prominent part in the shaping of events. As a rule, the modern statesman, however notable his achievements, can hardly claim a place among such moulders of history. To name one of the most eminent, Gladstone was always an opportunist, and even in the case of his championship of Home Rule he

was driven to the position he adopted by the force of circumstances.

Can we place the name of Abraham Lincoln in the first category? It is doubtful if any unanimous agreement could be arrived at on this point, but a careful survey of the events of his time will, I think, lead us to the conclusion that the substitution of some other President of the United States at the critical moment would have resulted in a very different solution of the grave problem which confronted America, from that which actually eventuated. The desire to find a way out of the difficulty which should at all costs avoid the horrors of civil war was strong on both sides, and overwhelmingly so in the case of the North. The majority of the politicians of that time were eager, probably over eager, for compromise; and extremists, such as the whole-hearted Abolitionists, were not merely scouted in the South, but cold-shouldered and looked upon with the gravest disfavour in the North. There was, indeed, in the North the strongest feeling against any disruption of the Union, but there were vast numbers who were prepared to sacrifice even this, should such a step prove to be the only manner of avoiding internecine strife. There was, again, a very large body of opinion which, while greatly averse to any extension of slavery within the borders of the States, were yet prepared to make concessions even on what was with them a question of prin-

ciple, rather than alienate the Southern States. Concessions in this direction had already been made to the South beyond what might have been considered justifiable, notably in the case of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and it seemed probable that further pressure by the slave-owning communities might lead in the final issue to further concession still. That a firm stand was made on this question of no further concession to slavery was due, we may say almost entirely, to the attitude taken up by Abraham Lincoln, and it was the adoption of this firm stand which led to the war between North and South, with all that it eventually entailed.

There are few to-day who would hesitate to affirm that Lincoln was justified in the attitude which he took up. There remains, however, the strong probability that, had he been absent from the helm, compromise might have held the day. If this is the true view to take, clearly Lincoln must be classed among those men who by their personal action have moulded history. It is for this reason that many have delighted to point to the nomination of Lincoln to the Presidency as evidence of the intervention of Providence in human affairs. For, taking the view that, apart from his election, the cause of slavery would in all probability have triumphed, they are able to show that to all appearance this election was due to fortuitous circumstances rather than to any

great movement of the majority of the American people to summon him to the first position in the great Republic as the man of their choice. Providence, these people will tell us, stepped in and so moulded events that the one man who could save the situation was chosen President. As William Eleroy Curtis <sup>1</sup> remarks :—

“ When Mr Lincoln was nominated for the Presidency he was an unknown man. He had occupied no important position. He had rendered no great public service. His reputation was that of a debater and politician, and did not become national until he delivered a remarkable speech at the Cooper Union, New York. His election was not due to personal popularity, nor to the strength of the party he represented, nor to the justice of his cause, but to factional strife and jealousies among his opponents.”

In following out the life-history of this remarkable man, I think we shall be able to realise that the position which Lincoln won was due more to his personal qualifications, diplomatic talents, and political foresight than is generally appreciated ; but a cursory view of the situation gives a very plausible appearance to the arguments advanced by those who would see in this appointment definite evidence of the overruling of the Divine Hand. At least the position taken up is a tacit admission how much in the actual course of events must be acknowledged to be due to Lincoln's personal character and individual action.

<sup>1</sup> *The True Abraham Lincoln*. p. 14.

The greatest appeal to the imagination is ever made by those men who have risen from the humblest situation in life to the highest pinnacle of fame. Lincoln's career was a case in point. When asked by the reporters after his election to the Presidency to give some account of his early life, he observed that all that he could say was comprised in the well-known line of Gray's Elegy :

“The short and simple annals of the poor.”

The reporters doubtless went away dissatisfied, and his biographers have been far from willing to accept this brief description of his early life as a sufficient account of the upbringing and youthful adventures of their hero. As is usual in such cases, every channel of information has been ransacked and Lincoln's early associates appealed to for reminiscences and records. The result is that we are able to furnish a fairly full and graphic account of the conditions under which Lincoln came into the world, and in which he grew up to manhood. These were far from affording favourable opportunities, in view of his future destiny. Though his family figured among the earliest settlers in the New England States, and some of them had risen to position and prosperity, Lincoln owed nothing to family connections. His parents were miserably poor, and his father was one of those people who always, somehow, managed to keep the wolf from the door without being suc-



cessful in ever shutting out from his conditions the proximate menace which the old adage implies. Samuel Lincoln, the progenitor of Abraham Lincoln, appears to have emigrated from the West of England some years subsequently to the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, and to have settled at a village called Hingham on the south shore of Massachusetts Bay. Among the descendants of this Samuel was one John, who became prominent in public life and was a member of the Convention that framed the first constitution of the State of Pennsylvania. John's third son was named Abraham. His father presented him with a farm in the Shenandoah Valley, and he married one Anna Boon, a cousin of Daniel Boon, a famous American pioneer, and by her had three sons. It happened that while at work upon his farm Abraham and his sons were attacked by a squad of Indians. The father was shot on the spot; the elder brother ran for a rifle and, coming back, shot his father's assailant. In the meantime Josiah, the second son, had gone to the neighbours for assistance, and the Indians took to flight without doing further damage. Of these three brothers, the youngest, Thomas, then a child of six, was the father of the future President. It is suggested that the mother, Anna, was a poor manager. Anyhow, she abandoned the farm in Jefferson County. Eventually the eldest son, Mordecai, inherited the bulk of his father's property, and subsequently became sheriff of



Washington County and a member of the Kentucky Legislature. Misfortune dogged Thomas's footsteps from his earliest years. For some unknown reason he seems to have been left to shift for himself, and at ten years of age is met with as a wandering labouring boy who supported himself by farm work and other such employment, and subsequently learned the trade of carpenter and cabinetmaker. He is stated to have been a powerfully built man, and, like his son, had a wide local reputation as a wrestler. While learning his trade of carpenter in the shop of Joseph Hanks, Thomas Lincoln fell in love with and married Nancy Hanks, the niece of his employer. Nancy Hanks was the youngest of eight children, and brought nothing to improve Thomas Lincoln's financial position. She is, however, represented as being a woman of a sweet temper and handsome appearance, and of intelligence and character superior to her position. Thomas Lincoln in the first instance took his wife to a log cabin in a village called Elizabeth Town, where he practised his trade as carpenter; but two years later he abandoned carpentering and moved to Hodgenville on Nolan Creek, where he took up farming as his means of livelihood. Here, in a one-room cabin with a single window, his eldest son and second child, Abraham Lincoln, was born on 12th February 1809, the first child, a daughter, Sarah, having been born at Elizabeth Town. Four years later the family moved to a more comfortable

home on Knob Creek, six miles from Hodgenville, and here Thomas Lincoln bought a farm of 238 acres.

Three years after this Thomas moved again. He does not appear to have done much good for himself with his farm, for he sold it for \$20 in money and ten barrels of whisky. These and his household effects he loaded in a flat-boat, which finally landed him at Thompson's Ferry, in Perry County, Indiana. The boat upset on the way, and part of the whisky was lost as well as some of his other effects, which were possibly of more value. Thomas Lincoln's destination was a piece of timber-land one and a half miles from what is now Gentryville. Here he built a log cabin fourteen feet square, open to the weather on one side, and without either windows or chimney. It appears, then, that Abraham Lincoln's third home was even worse than its predecessors. Here Thomas raised a patch of corn and some vegetables during the summer. Other food, however, was not difficult to procure, as game was abundant, and the streams were full of fish, and wild fruits were plentiful. Abraham slept on a heap of dry leaves in a loft at one end of the cabin. His father purchased his quarter-section of land, according to the arrangements of those days, by yearly payments, and it took him eleven years in this manner to obtain a patent for half of it. Having done so, however, he erected a permanent home of logs, which proved a comfortable tenement.

[To face page 8.]



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THE BIRTHPLACE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



In the autumn of 1818, when Abraham was between nine and ten years old, misfortune overtook the family. An epidemic visited the neighbourhood, and among the victims was his mother, Nancy. This left his sister, a girl of only eleven years, in charge of the household. The family struggled on under these conditions until the autumn of 1819, when their father returned to Hodgenville and married Sally Bush Johnston, a widow with three children, whom he had courted before his first marriage. She brought a little property into the family as well as her three children, and her influence proved to be a good one, as she stimulated her husband to industry and made a prudent and wise stepmother for Abraham, encouraging his talents and assisting him in every way as far as she was able.

Meanwhile Abraham was growing up. His great height and unusual strength made him foremost in athletic sports, and he was early noted for his studious habits and powers of memory. He soon gained a reputation as the best talker and storyteller in the neighbourhood. At the age of sixteen he worked a ferry-boat at the mouth of Anderson's Creek, transporting passengers across the Ohio River. At the age of nineteen he made his first journey outside the Indiana Forest. Mr Gentry, the leading man in the neighbourhood, who kept a store, sent Abraham along with his own son, Allen, upon a flat-boat to New Orleans, with a

load of bacon, corn-meal, and other provisions, paying him \$8 a month and his passage home on a steamboat. On this journey they were attacked by some negroes while trading along the sugar coast, but succeeded in driving them off without serious damage having been done.

On another occasion somewhat later a second voyage down the Mississippi was made by Lincoln. An incident in this journey made an indelible impression on his mind, and deserves to be related in view of its bearing on the work he was destined later to accomplish. Among the sights that Lincoln witnessed at New Orleans on this occasion was the slave-market of that city. He saw there negroes chained, maltreated, and scourged. In a slave auction he and his companions were the witnesses when a fine mulatto girl was pinched, prodded, and trotted up and down the room to show how she moved, that bidders might satisfy themselves of the soundness of the article which they were proposing to buy. John Hanks observes of the incident: "Lincoln saw it. His heart bled. He said nothing much. Was silent. I can see, however," he adds, "that it was on this trip that he formed his opinion of slavery. It ran its iron into him then and there. I have heard him say so, often." On another occasion, referring to the same incident, he said that Lincoln remarked, "If ever I get a chance to hit that thing I will hit it hard." Whether this observation was put into his

mouth in the light of subsequent events, we have no means of knowing ; but clearly Lincoln did not forget. Such incidents in early life often leave more mark and produce greater results than is realised at the time. Rousseau tells a similar story with regard to the origin of his hatred of the oppressive French Government of the eighteenth century. It was in the course of his early wanderings in France, after he had left his native Geneva. Having walked further from home than he had intended and lost his way, he found himself half dead with hunger and thirst at the house of a French peasant. He entered in, hoping to find something to appease his ravenous appetite, but was offered nothing but coarse barley bread and skimmed milk. By and by, however, the peasant into whose home he had entered discovered the character of his guest, and, having satisfied himself that he was not likely to “give him away,” descended by a trap-door into his cellar, and brought up some good brown bread, meat, and a bottle of wine, and subsequently cooked an omelette for his benefit. Having done so, he explained to Rousseau that he had hidden away the wine on account of the duties, and his bread on account of the *taille*, declaring that he would be a ruined man if any suspicion were aroused that he was not dying of hunger. In commenting on the incident, Rousseau observes : “Here was the germ of that inextinguishable hatred which afterwards grew up in my



heart against the vexations that harassed the common people, and against their oppressors. This man actually did not dare to eat the bread which he had won by the sweat of his brow, and only avoided ruin by showing the same misery as reigned all around him." It is a mistake to underestimate the influence of such incidents when they occur in early life, when the mind is more impressionable than in later years. In both these cases an incident, apparently quite trivial, led to results which affected the whole history of the world.

In 1830, when Abraham was just twenty-one, there was yet another family migration. "His father and stepmother," he tells us, "with the families of the two daughters and sons-in-law of the step-mother, left the old homestead in Indiana and came to Illinois. His father and family settled a new place on the north side of the Sangamon River, at the junction of the timber-land and property about ten miles westerly from Decatur. Here they built a log cabin, into which they removed, and made sufficient rails to fence ten acres of ground, fenced and broke the ground, and raised a crop of sown corn upon it the same year." The sons-in-law of his stepmother, here alluded to, were Dennis Hanks and Levi Hall, who had married Sarah and Matilda, Lincoln's step-sisters.

Abraham Lincoln's schooling was of a very spasmodic character. He first went to school when he was seven years old and was living in



Kentucky. The school was held in a log hut near the Lincolns' cabin, and was taught by an Irish Catholic of the name of Zachariah Riney, and it was here that he learned to read. In the following year he attended along with his sister Sarah a school some three or four miles distant, kept by one Caleb Hazel, where the two children were taught to write. This was all the schooling he had in Kentucky except what his mother taught him. At the age of nine he again attended school for a few months, and apparently again after a long interval when he was fourteen. He also attended some classes with a man named Swaney some three years later. He was always a studious boy, and his inclination in this direction was encouraged by his stepmother, who helped him in his work at home and read with him. His father, however, evidently considered that he was better occupied assisting him in his farmwork than in cultivating his mind with a view to future eventualities.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY STRUGGLES

WHEN he reached the age of twenty-one Lincoln became a clerk at Denton Offutt's store at New Salem, and in the following year started on a mercantile adventure on his own account, which ended disastrously. He went into partnership with a man named Berry, in a local grocery stores. Berry took to drink, and the stores were finally sold at a heavy loss. The goodwill and stock of the stores had been bought on credit, and when the business was disposed of this was a credit transaction also. The man to whom they were sold shortly after failed and disappeared. Lincoln was thus left with the liability for the purchase money of the stores upon his shoulders, without having seen any part of the money for which the business had been sold again. Berry himself had died of drink, so that there was no assistance forthcoming in this direction. This liability weighed very heavily on Lincoln for a number of years, and he used humorously to allude to it as "the National Debt." Rather than go bankrupt or come

to a composition with his creditors, he decided, like Sir Walter Scott under similar circumstances, to offer to pay off the whole on the understanding that they would give him sufficient time to do so. He accordingly went to them, explained the circumstances, and undertook to give them all he could earn over and above his bare living.

In the upshot he paid them all off, but it took him some fifteen years to do so. In only one case was his offer refused, one of his creditors selling his interest in the debt due to him. The purchaser eventually brought action and obtained judgment against him, and levied upon the horse, saddle, and instruments which were used by him in the surveying business in which he was at that time engaged. At this crisis in his fate a farmer friend of his, of the name of James Short, heard of his trouble, and without informing Lincoln attended the sale and bought in the horse and instruments for \$120, making them over to their former owner. When Lincoln became President he did not forget his benefactor. Thirty years after, James Short, who had removed to the Far West, received a letter from Washington containing the announcement that he had been commissioned by the Government as Indian agent.

Shortly after this Lincoln had his one and only experience of soldiering. The Indian chief, Black Hawk, had entered into a treaty to remain on the western side of the Mississippi. He crossed the

river, however, in defiance of the agreement entered into. The Governor of Illinois thereupon called for volunteers, and Lincoln among others offered his services. Much to his surprise and gratification, he was elected captain of his company, this being doubtless due not a little to his great physical strength and height. He was now six foot four, and enjoyed no small reputation among his neighbours for his feats of physical prowess. He saw, however, no actual fighting, and apparently had his work cut out in keeping his somewhat unruly company in order. On one occasion during this expedition a friendly Indian found his way into the American camp. He produced a letter of credentials which was pronounced a forgery by Lincoln's men, who proposed to hang him as a spy. Lincoln, however, appeared on the scene in time, and with his usual humanity promptly rescued the hapless man from his impending fate.

As soon as this little war was over, Lincoln became a candidate for his State Legislature, and, though not elected, succeeded in securing practically the whole votes in his immediate neighbourhood. He had shown quite early a remarkable aptitude as a ready, original, and witty speaker, as well as a popular story-teller, and his power of getting the ear of his audience by his direct and frank manner, coupled with his pithy and homely illustrations in support of his arguments, soon earned for him a reputation of which he was not

slow to take advantage. Whatever people might have thought in those early days of his qualifications as their representative, there were apparently no two opinions as to his unique gifts as a popular stump orator.

Lincoln was now at his wits' end to find "the needful." He subsisted for some time living from hand to mouth by the aid of odd jobs done for neighbouring farmers and other friends. But when his prospects seemed at their lowest he was fortunate in being recommended to John Calhoun, then surveyor of the county, as his assistant. Lincoln at this time knew nothing of the work which would qualify him for his position. With the help, however, of one Mentor Graham, a schoolmaster who had already employed him as a clerk, and with much hard application on his own part, he soon acquired the rudiments of the business, and it has always been said to his credit that his surveys of property were done with the greatest care and accuracy. A further small financial assistance came to him by his appointment to the local post-mastership. New Salem was but a village, and has long since disappeared off the map. The duties involved, accordingly, were not serious, and it is stated that he "carried the office around in his hat." In 1834 he again became a candidate for the Illinois Legislature. His uncouth appearance and ill-fitting clothes (his trousers were always several inches too short for him) were

successful as an advertisement of their wearer, but the first impressions such a strange figure created were by no means always in his favour. It is related that one of those present at an early election meeting asked, on seeing him, "Can't the party raise any better material than that?" But after hearing him speak he completely changed his mind, and declared that Lincoln knew more than all the other candidates put together. On this occasion he was duly returned, being at the time twenty-five years of age.

In those days politicians did not wait for any political convention to construct a platform, but were in the habit of issuing their own manifestos, irrespective of the party to which they were attached. The following is Lincoln's as it appeared in the local paper of the day :—

" NEW SALEM, *June 13, 1836.*

" *To the Editor of the ' Journal.'*

" In your paper of last Saturday I see a communication over the signature of ' Many Voters ' in which the candidates who are announced in the *Journal* are called upon to ' show their hands.' Agreed. Here's mine :—

" I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently, I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arms (by no means excluding females).

" If elected I shall consider the whole people of Sangamon my constituents, as well those that oppose as those that support me.

" While acting as their representative, I shall be



governed by their will on all subjects upon which I have the means of knowing what their will is ; and upon all others I shall do what my own judgment teaches me will best advance their interests. Whether elected or not, I go for distributing the proceeds of the sales of public lands to the several States to enable our State, in common with others, to dig canals and construct railroads without borrowing money and paying the interest on it.

“ If alive on the first Monday in November, I shall vote for Hugh L. White for President.—Very respectfully,

“ A. LINCOLN.”

It is clear that Lincoln appealed to the electors on a broad platform, boldly announcing his approval of female suffrage, and an enterprising policy with regard to the development of the resources of the State. This ambitious programme was, as a matter of fact, carried a good deal further than the financial capacity of the State allowed, and reckless expenditure, regardless of the ability of the State to foot the bills involved, soon landed Illinois in a parlous predicament. In this case, as in others throughout his life, Lincoln showed a lack of any true grasp of large financial problems. It is true he was not alone to blame for the position that resulted, but he threw himself heart and soul into a venture which more prudent statesmanship would have approached in far less reckless way, and the State suffered from the results of the too sanguine temperament of its representatives for many years after.

It was on the second occasion of his election to

the Illinois Legislature that Lincoln made a speech which was very characteristic of the speaker, and which was remembered against its unfortunate victim for a long time after it had been delivered. It was a few days before the election at Springfield, and among those present was a certain George Forquer, a man of recognised prominence and ability as a lawyer in the locality. Forquer had been one of the leading members of the Whig party, but had recently turned his coat and joined the Democrats, to the great disgust of his erstwhile supporters. As a result apparently of this change of mind, he had received the appointment of Registrar of the Land Office. About the same time Forquer had had built for himself a mansion of greater pretensions than those of his neighbours, and over it he had had erected a lightning-rod, the first of its kind to be seen in Springfield. At the conclusion of Lincoln's speech, Forquer rose and requested to be heard. He began by saying that the young man (alluding to Lincoln) would have to be taken down, and regretted that the task devolved upon himself. He replied in detail to Lincoln's speech, giving himself considerable airs of superiority. As soon as he sat down, Lincoln rose to reply. "Mr Forquer," he observed, "commenced his speech by announcing that the young man would have to be taken down. It is for you, fellow-citizens, not for me, to say whether I am up or down. The gentleman has seen fit to



allude to my being a young man ; but he forgets that I am older in years than I am in the tricks and trades of politicians. I desire to live, and I desire place and distinction ; but I would rather die now than, like this gentleman, live to see the day that I would change my politics for an office worth three thousand dollars a year, and then feel compelled to erect a lightning-rod to protect a guilty conscience from an offended God."

The effect of the rejoinder was dramatic, and Forquer found it desirable to make himself very scarce for some time afterwards.

Lincoln's capacity in his quite early life for holding his audience, as well as his ungainly appearance, is borne witness to by Judge Stephen T. Logan, with whom he subsequently went into partnership. Judge Logan writes of him in those days : " He was a tall, gawky, and rough-looking fellow. His pantaloons did not meet his shoes by six inches, but after he began speaking I became very much interested in him. He made a very sensible speech. His manner was very much the same as in after life. That is, the somewhat peculiar characteristics were apparent then, though of course in after years he evinced more knowledge and experience. But he had then the same novelty and the same peculiarity in presenting his ideas."

Lincoln remained a member of the Illinois Legislature for some time, being regularly re-elected for

three further terms of two years each. In the meantime he had been devoting his leisure to a study of the law, and had even practised a little as an unlicensed practitioner in the inferior courts. In 1837 he was fortunate in obtaining a proper licence. In those days, in the Western States, reading for the law was not so arduous or so exacting an undertaking as it is to-day, and a comparatively brief course of study was deemed sufficient as a qualification.

About this time a Bill was brought in and passed by the State Government for moving the capital to Springfield, for the carrying of which Lincoln himself enjoyed no little local credit. With the removal of the Legislature Lincoln removed himself. The society in Springfield was naturally of a much less primitive kind than that of New Salem, and Lincoln began to find himself for the first time in association with people who had some pretensions to education and culture. Here he entered into a law partnership with a friend, John T. Stuart, and on Stuart's election to Congress four years later a new partnership was formed with Stephen T. Logan as above mentioned. He was still at this time in the most urgent need of funds. An incident on his first arrival at Springfield bears eloquent testimony to this fact. Requiring to find himself some place of abode, he went into a shop and purchased a bedstead with a view to furnishing it, and then went on to a young tradesman,

one Joshua Speed, to ask the price of the cheapest bedding and other necessary articles. The sum quoted him was \$17, which he found it impossible to produce. Joshua Speed, however, took a fancy to his customer, and, having a large double bedstead himself, offered to let him share it for the time being. Lincoln went upstairs to have a look at the room, and came back delighted. "Well, Speed, I'm moved," he said, shaking him warmly by the hand. Speed was evidently impressed by his tragic air. "I looked up at him," he said, narrating the story of his interview afterwards, "and thought then, as I think now, that I never saw so gloomy and melancholy a face in my life."

## CHAPTER III

### LOVE AFFAIRS AND MARRIAGE

TO his constant financial difficulties at this time must be added the effect of a recent love affair which had had a very pathetic ending, the tragedy of which for a time went near to affecting Lincoln's reason, and is stated to have cast a shadow over all his subsequent life. This love affair had for its object a certain Anne Rutledge, who was the daughter of one of the founders of the village of Salem, who kept the tavern at which Lincoln was a boarder. He came of a family of some note, and boasted of the fact that his grandfather was one of the signatories of the Declaration of American Independence. The girl, who is described as something of a local beauty, had auburn hair, blue eyes, and a fair complexion. At the time Lincoln first knew her she was engaged to a certain John M'Neill or, as he gave his name subsequently, M'Namara. This young man, starting in poverty, had made very successful headway with his business undertakings, and the match seemed to

hold out favourable prospects to the young couple. M'Namara, however, before settling down and marrying, proposed to go East to arrange certain business matters in connection with his family, who, he said, did not know of his whereabouts, and from whom he had deliberately concealed his movements, fearing that they might interfere with his prospects. M'Namara, to whom the girl was obviously deeply attached, went on his projected journey, but his letters, after his departure, grew fewer and colder, and it seemed to his *fiancée* that he would be glad to be released from his engagement. She wrote eventually and made the offer to set him free, but waited in vain for an answer to her letter. Meanwhile her pathetic air had aroused the sympathy of the neighbours, and her own family in particular were intensely indignant with M'Namara, and urged her to give up all thought of a man who had treated her so badly. About this time Lincoln appeared on the scene, and naturally, as he boarded at her father's tavern, saw much of the young girl. Indeed, it appears that he generally sat beside her at table, and spent the evening in her company. Pity is said to be akin to love, and certainly in Lincoln's case one soon gave place to the other. He was encouraged in his suit by her relatives, who were glad to place an obstacle in the way of the return of M'Namara, and finally, recognising the hopelessness of regaining her first love, she consented to become his wife.

The shock, however, of what she had suffered proved too much for her. She developed brain fever, which ended fatally. The neighbours attributed her illness to a broken heart. The blow to Lincoln was terrible. He sank into a condition of profound melancholy, and his grief was so intense that his friends were afraid that he would commit suicide. Later on, after he had been elected President, speaking of the matter to a friend, he observed, "I really loved that girl, and often think of her now; and I have loved the name of Rutledge to this day."

His next affair of the heart, if so it may be called, occurred three or four years later, at Springfield. The heroine in this case was a Miss Mary Owens. It is evident that Lincoln's affections were never really engaged in the case, and he seems to have been drawn into a false position in the matter by his own rather fantastic sense of honour. He had met Miss Owens once before, and thought her attractive, and, meeting her married sister, Mrs Abel, took the opportunity to inquire after her. Mrs Abel told Lincoln, apparently in jest, that she would bring her sister back with her to Springfield if he would consent to marry her. The offer was accepted by Lincoln, who did not seem to consider that it was meant seriously. He was informed, however, later, to his consternation, that the young lady expected him to fulfil his agreement, and he felt himself bound to propose to her, which



he did in a manner which must certainly have given her the impression that she had no very ardent lover. In any case she refused him, and his feelings on the occasion seem to have been a mixture of humiliation and relief, as he had come to the conclusion that the lady in question was not likely to find another lover in a hurry. In this, as the event proved, he was mistaken. It is admitted by those who knew her that she was a capable, intelligent, and withal handsome young woman, but evidently she did not make appeal to Lincoln. When he met her the second time her early attractions had given place to a somewhat premature stoutness and matronly figure, and she must have presented in every way a marked contrast to his first love. She, on her part, complained that Lincoln was lacking in the attentions which a girl had a right to expect from an admirer, which, under the circumstances, is hardly to be wondered at. Writing to a lady friend on the subject, Lincoln observed, "Others have been made fools of by girls, but this can never with truth be said of me. I most emphatically in this instance made a fool of myself"—a conclusion with which most people will find it difficult to disagree.

Certainly Lincoln was one of those people for whom the proverb that the course of true love never did run smooth had a specially appropriate application. His third adventure of the kind was destined to eventuate in matrimony, but not before

serious complications had supervened; and even so the choice of his partner has been the subject of considerable criticism and comment on the part of his biographers, who seem generally to have agreed with her sister, who made the remark in the early days of their courtship, that she and Lincoln were not suited to one another. The lady in question was a certain Mary Todd, who originally came to Springfield on a visit to her sister, who was the wife of Ninian W. Edwards, a person of some consequence in the neighbourhood, and one of Lincoln's colleagues in the Illinois Legislature. There does not seem to be much dispute about Miss Todd's early attractions. She occupied a prominent position in the society of that day, was bright, witty, and vivacious, and by no means destitute of good looks. She was, however, quick-tempered and somewhat imperious, and frequent quarrels broke out between the two lovers as a consequence. Matters at last became so unsatisfactory that it seemed a mistake to continue the engagement, and Lincoln himself suggested its being broken off. This, however, was more than the young lady herself had bargained for. She burst into tears at the interview, and Lincoln kissed her, in token, presumably, of forgiveness. The upshot of it, however, was that the engagement continued, in spite of Lincoln's reluctance and obvious unhappiness over the prospect of marriage. Things drifted on until (according to one story) the



marriage was finally fixed for the first of January 1841. When the day came everyone put in an appearance at the anticipated ceremony except the bridegroom, who was waited for in vain.<sup>1</sup> The next day, after a persistent search, Lincoln's friends found him, in a condition of misery and desperation. In a letter written on the 23rd January following, to his partner, Stuart, he observes: "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not."

Apparently after this fiasco Miss Todd did the only thing which seemed possible under the circumstances, and wrote releasing Lincoln from his engagement. Lincoln's own disinclination to the marriage was quite manifest, and the prospect of a happy consummation seemed outside the bounds of possibility. By degrees he recovered his spirits and resumed his practice of the law. The paths of the two diverged, and the whole matter might well have been treated as an episode of the past. Things went on in this fashion for some eighteen months, when the idea occurred to the wife of Simeon Francis, editor of the *Sangamon Journal*,

<sup>1</sup> This incident has been disputed, but the reference to "the fatal first of January 1841" stands on record as a crisis which led not only to a breach between the two lovers, but also to a serious breakdown on Lincoln's part. Under the circumstances, what precisely happened must be left to surmise.

to bring the two together once more. The lady in question was a warm friend of Mary Todd, and presumably was acquainted with her wishes; while the husband was a friend of Lincoln. Mrs Francis was a great social entertainer, and doubtless it seemed to her that if she could bring about a reconciliation between the rising young politician and the brilliant society belle it would be a feather in her social cap. The result was that the engagement was renewed, Lincoln, though unwilling, perhaps feeling, not without reason, that he had inflicted upon the young lady an undeserved humiliation and owed her reparation. For fear of a renewed disaster the marriage arrangements were kept a profound secret. One morning in November Lincoln arrived at the home of his friend, James H. Matheney, while the latter was still in bed, and informed him that he was to be married the same evening. It is related that while dressing for the wedding in his room at his friend Butler's house, the latter's little boy, seeing Lincoln so handsomely attired, asked him where he was going. "To Hell, I suppose," was Lincoln's rejoinder. The marriage licence was duly obtained, and the pair were united by the Rev. Charles N. Dresser in the presence of a hastily assembled company of friends of the bride and bridegroom. It is plain that, as Mr Wm. H. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner for many years, states, Lincoln married Mary Todd to save his honour, and in doing so sacrificed his

domestic peace. The main facts of the case have been glossed over or disputed by a number of biographers, but they do not appear to admit of any real doubt ; and in view of the long period that has elapsed since the date of these incidents, and the fact that all the people concerned are long since dead, it seems foolish to make any concealment of the real circumstances of the case. Mary Todd was quick-tempered, inconsiderate, and lacking in self-control. As a wife she was constantly making scenes which rendered her husband's position extremely uncomfortable, and his uniform forbearance merely had the effect of making matters worse than they would have been had the lady married a husband who was less disposed to tolerate her outbursts.

One or two instances will be sufficient to illustrate this regrettable tendency. A lady relative who lived for two years with the Lincolns told Mr Herndon that Mr Lincoln was in the habit of lying on the floor with the back of a chair for a pillow when he read. "One evening, when in this position in the hall, a knock was heard at the front door, and, though in his shirt sleeves, Lincoln answered the call. Two ladies were at the door, whom he invited into the parlour, notifying them, in his open, familiar way, that he would 'trot the womenfolk out.' Mrs Lincoln from an adjoining room witnessed the ladies' entrance and overheard her husband's jocose expression. Her indignation

was so instantaneous that she made the situation exceedingly interesting for him, and he was glad to retreat from the mansion. He did not return till very late at night, and then slipped in quietly at a back door." One of the difficulties of the household was due to the fact that Mrs Lincoln's unreasonableness and violent temper made it impossible for her to retain servants in her employ for any length of time. On one occasion a man whose niece had been engaged by her called at the house to learn why the girl has been so uncereemoniously dismissed from her employment. Mrs Lincoln met the man at the door, giving vent to her feelings and resorting to such violent gesticulations and emphatic language that the man beat a hasty retreat. He took the earliest opportunity of complaining to Lincoln himself on the matter and exacting, as he hoped, proper satisfaction for his wife's conduct. He found Lincoln entertaining a crowd in a local store. The man called him to the door and put his complaint before him. Lincoln, having listened to his story, observed, in his quiet way: "My friend, I regret to hear this; but let me ask you in all candour, cannot you endure for a few moments what I have had as my daily portion for the last fifteen years?" Lincoln's appeal completely disarmed the offended fellow-townsmen. Grasping the unfortunate husband's hands, he expressed his sympathy in no uncertain terms. Lincoln afterwards, adds

Herndon, had no better friend in Springfield. Lincoln made special efforts to retain the services of one of the servants who was specially useful in the household. On account of the frequency of the tempestuous scenes with Mrs Lincoln, this was no easy matter. Finally Lincoln made an arrangement with her, of course without his wife's knowledge, to pay her an extra dollar a week out of his own pocket, on the understanding that she should humour his wife and overlook her frequent outbreaks. The natural result of this state of affairs was that Lincoln did not spend more time in his home than he found necessary. In this connection Judge Davis's statement is of interest. He observes: "As a general rule, when all the lawyers on a Saturday evening would go home and see their families and friends, Lincoln would find some excuse and refuse to go. We said nothing, but it seemed to us all that he was not domestically happy."

Mary Todd was extremely ambitious from a social standpoint; and, indeed, had assured her friends, long before she married, that she had set her heart upon becoming a President's wife. Curiously enough, a double chance seemed to offer itself to her, as during her early engagement with Lincoln, Stephen Douglas, destined later to become Lincoln's greatest rival, and looked upon by many as a probable future President of the United States, crossed her path. In spite of her prior



engagement, a somewhat violent flirtation ensued, and it was thought by some that Miss Todd preferred Douglas to his rival. As, from the society point of view, Douglas was far more accomplished and attractive than Lincoln, who was shy and awkward in the presence of the ladies, this is hardly to be wondered at. In any case, Mary Todd fell ill, harassed, as it appears, by her perplexity between the rival suitors, and it is stated that the lady's physician, Dr William Wallace, intervened, saw Douglas, and induced him to withdraw. It is clear that Lincoln was under the spell of the lady's fascination, even while he felt that the marriage could only end in disaster. His habitual inability to say "No" sealed his fate, and led to a marriage which failed at least to bring him domestic happiness. There were, however, undoubted compensations. Lincoln had no family connections or social influence. Mary Todd had both. She was not only a good conversationalist, but spoke French and English with equal fluency. She had a quick intelligence and, when her temper did not get the better of her, charming and attractive manners. In addition to this, a very important point in marrying a man so poor as Lincoln, she was an excellent housewife, had a good judgment of men and matters, and did much to stimulate Lincoln's ambition in his political career. In fact, on one occasion she intervened when an offer was made to him of a Territorial

governorship, which, had the offer been accepted by him, would have led to his being side-tracked at the most critical period of his career, with the consequent loss of all prospects of filling the chief office of State. It can hardly be doubted that, where his political life was concerned, her advice and guidance were of great value.

It may be added that there is no question but that Mrs Lincoln admired and appreciated her husband, however unsuccessful she may have been, through her own faults of temper, in making him happy. And the husband, however distasteful his home life may have been to him, appreciated the fact that the frequent scenes were no true index to his wife's feelings towards him. The home situation, however, undoubtedly contributed not a little to deepen Lincoln's natural melancholy and gloomy outlook on life.

## CHAPTER IV

### LEGAL PRACTICE—LINCOLN AS MEMBER OF CONGRESS

LINCOLN was now no longer a member of the Illinois Legislature, and it was his wife's ambition as well as his own that he should become a member of Congress. There were, however, difficulties in the way of his nomination. Other people in Illinois had claims as well as himself. Lincoln belonged to the old Whig party, to which, not long after, the Civil War gave the *coup de grâce*; while his great rival, Stephen Douglas, was a Democrat. Among the Whigs who were in the running against him in Illinois were Baker and Hardin, two prominent local politicians of the day, and Lincoln was annoyed to find that at the party gathering to settle the question of nomination Baker received more support than himself, apparently owing to the fact that he was backed by the various local religious denominations, with whom Lincoln was by no means in favour, on account of his reputation for free thinking. It became accordingly Lincoln's



duty to work for Baker. When, however, the matter came before the official party convention, Hardin, not Baker, was chosen, and Lincoln, sacrificing his own interests, felt it his duty to press Baker's claims for the representation of Illinois at the subsequent election two years later. This meant Lincoln himself standing aside for a period of four years. It was not, accordingly, till the spring of 1847 that he took his seat in the House of Representatives. The interval was devoted to his regular law practice. In April 1841 Lincoln had retired from his first partnership with Stuart (who had been elected to Congress), and had gone into partnership with Stephen T. Logan, who enjoyed the reputation of being the best *nisi prius* lawyer in the State and who presented in every way the greatest contrast to Lincoln, being orderly and methodical, and having a very intimate grasp of the details of the law. These qualities were undoubtedly very helpful to Lincoln in his partnership, a mastery of detail never being one of his strong points, while his lack of order and method hampered him throughout in his business, and to some extent also in his political career. Logan, however, had also political ambitions, and they clashed with those of Lincoln. Apparently for this reason the partnership was severed, and Lincoln appealed to William H. Herndon to take his place. This latter partnership was continued uninterrupted until Lincoln's death, Herndon carrying on the

business on his own responsibility during Lincoln's period of office as President.

Shortly before Lincoln's election to Congress, war had broken out between the United States and Mexico, and Lincoln, in common with the rest of the Whig party, had opposed a resort to extreme measures. While supporting the necessary votes of credit for carrying on the war with energy when once it had broken out, Lincoln made no concealment of his own disapproval of the whole enterprise, and protested that "the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President." The strong line he took in this matter gave offence to a considerable number of his constituents, and would probably have led to his defeat had he offered himself for re-election to Congress. It was only some twenty years before this time that Mexico had revolted from Spain, and seven years later the province of Texas had in its turn withdrawn from the Mexican Republic. Texas had been peopled to a great extent by immigrants from the United States, and a petition was got up by an influential section of the inhabitants for annexation to the American Republic. In 1845 an Annexation Bill was pushed through at the expiration of his term of office by President Tyler, in spite of Whig opposition. Hereupon Mexico, which had throughout opposed the arrangement, broke off diplomatic relations. There was a dispute about the exact frontier as between Texas and Mexico. Mexico claimed both banks of

the Rio Grande, which the American Government maintained should be the border of the respective territories. The new President, Polk, ordered General Taylor to march his troops up the banks of the Rio Grande and occupy a position commanding the encampment of the Mexican soldiers. The Mexican general hereupon attacked, and a war ensued which by a little diplomacy could easily have been prevented. It appeared that the American President had acted without justification, and that he was anxious to provoke war rather than to avoid it. This at least was the criticism levelled against him, and it had many supporters among the American public. The military success of the American Army soon, however, settled the questions at issue. General Taylor and General Scott completely defeated the Mexican forces, and the city of Mexico was occupied in September 1847.

The critics of the war, however just may have been their contentions, found themselves at a manifest disadvantage in face of the accomplished fact ; and as, in the words of the proverb, " Nothing succeeds like success," the anti-war party began to incur no little popular hostility, and Lincoln, who never compromised with his conscience or hesitated to speak out for the cause which he believed to be right, was himself one of the sufferers from this wave of popular feeling. Lincoln took up the position that the President had, in effect, by his instructions to General Taylor, himself

initiated the war, and that this was directly contrary to constitutional usage.

Apart from the matter of Mexico, nothing of particular importance occurred while Lincoln was a Member of Congress, while he himself, though he made certain political friendships which were of use to him subsequently, failed to make any special mark in the House of Representatives. As evidence of his interest in the abolition of slavery, he introduced a little Bill for its gradual and compensated extinction in the District of Columbia, having previously ascertained that the representative people of the district approved of it; but the Bill met with no encouragement from either side. On Lincoln's part it was little more than an advertisement of his own standpoint, and in the upshot was not pressed to a division. As already stated, he decided not to offer himself for re-election, and on his retirement received an offer of the Governorship of Oregon Territory, which, personally, he felt tempted to accept. Mrs Lincoln, however, realising that by this act he would cut himself off from political life, very wisely induced him to decline the offer. It is clear, however, that his experience at Washington had proved a disappointing one to him and for some time after he showed a disinclination to take any active or prominent part in American politics, and returned once more to his legal pursuits.

In those days, in the Western States, courts travelled in circuits—a practice now discontinued—

and each court was presided over by a judge who went from one county town to another to hear whatever cases were on the list. Springfield was situated in the Eighth Judicial Circuit, and included fifteen counties in the central part of Illinois. There being no railways at that time, the judge travelled on horseback or in a carriage, followed by the lawyers. The meeting of the Supreme Court once a year at Springfield was a great event, and, in consequence, attracted large numbers of people to the town.

“ When the county town was reached ” (says William Eleroy Curtis <sup>1</sup>), “ the judge was given the best room at the hotel and presided at the dining-room table, surrounded by lawyers, jurors, witnesses, litigants, prisoners on bail, and even the men who drove their teams. The hotels were primitive and limited, and, as the sitting of a court usually attracted all the idle men in the vicinity, the landlords were taxed to accommodate their guests, and packed them in as closely as possible ; usually two in a bed and often as many as could find room on the floor. The townspeople made the semi-annual meeting of the court an occasion for social festivities, the judge being the guest of honour at dinners, receptions, quiltings, huskings, weddings, and other entertainments, while the lawyers ranked according to their social standing and accomplishments.

“ In some of the towns there was no court-house, and trials were held in a church or a school-house, and sometimes, when the weather was favourable, in the open air.”

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<sup>1</sup> *The True Abraham Lincoln.*

On such occasions Lincoln was a great centre of attraction owing to his well-known reputation as a brilliant story-teller. In one instance, indeed, he seems to have gone too far, and disturbed the hearing of the case by collecting a large crowd in the corner of the court-room to listen to his witty stories. Anyhow, the presiding judge (Judge Davis) rapped on the bench and, calling him by name, exclaimed: "Mr Lincoln, this must stop. There is no use in trying to carry on two courts. One of them will have to adjourn, and I think yours will have to be the one." After the judicial proceedings were over, the judge called to Lincoln and insisted on the stories that caused so much merriment being repeated to him.

Lawyers' fees in those days were very low compared with what they became later, and Lincoln was especially conscientious in his refusal to charge high fees. The account book of Stuart & Lincoln shows that the fees charged did not exceed \$1600 for the year, and were rarely more than \$10 for a case. On one occasion, however, Lincoln presented a bill for two thousand dollars, in an important case in which he appeared for the Illinois Central Railroad, and the fee was complained of as excessive. Having withdrawn the original bill, he consulted professional friends, and later on submitted another for five thousand dollars instead of two, with a memorandum signed by six of the most prominent lawyers in the State, giving their opinion



that the fee was not unreasonable. The company still refused to pay, and Lincoln sued and recovered the full amount. The case arose from the fact that the Illinois Railroad was exempt from taxation by its charter, conditional on its paying into the State Treasury 7 per cent. of its gross earnings. The officials of M'Lean County disputed this right, and contended that the Legislature of the State had no authority to exempt or remit county taxes. They brought a suit to compel payment, and Lincoln defended and won the case.

On the matter of fees Lincoln wrote : " An exorbitant fee should never be claimed. As a general rule, never take your whole fee in advance, or any more than a small retainer. When fully paid beforehand, you are more than a common mortal if you can feel the same interest in the case as if something was still in prospect for you as well as for your client."

On one occasion Lincoln secured the acquittal of an old neighbour, named Duff Armstrong, on a charge of murder. Several witnesses testified that they saw the accused commit the deed one night about eleven o'clock. Lincoln induced the witnesses to amplify their statements, and particularly the assertion that they had seen the act distinctly on account of the bright moonlight. By cross-examining still further he was able to prove the exact position and size of the moon at the time of the murder. Lincoln finally announced that he had no defence to

submit except an almanac, which showed that there was no moon visible on that particular night ! Needless to say, the accused got off, and in addition all the witnesses were impeached and convicted of perjury.

Lincoln had a habit of studying the opposite side of every disputed question in every law case or political issue, no less carefully than his own side. In consequence he was never surprised by the strength of the arguments of his opponent. His habit was almost invariably to brush aside the less important points in a case and go for the essential issue. Said Justice Davis with regard to him : “ He seized the strong points of a case and presented them with clearness and great compactness. His mind was logical and direct, and he did not indulge in superfluous discussion. An unfailing fund of humour never deserted him, and he was able to claim the attention of court and jury when the cause was most uninteresting by the appropriateness of his anecdotes. The framework of his mental and moral being was honesty, and a wrong cause was poorly defended by him.” Conscious of his own weakness in defending a bad case, he was in the habit of persuading his clients to give up litigation in such instances, even when he felt that he could probably win the case. Leonard Swett, of Chicago, one of the most famous American lawyers, states that sometimes after Lincoln entered upon a criminal case the conviction that his client was



guilty would affect him with a sort of panic. On one occasion he turned suddenly to his associate, and said : " Swett, the man is guilty. You defend him, I cannot," thus giving up his share of a large fee.

The business of Lincoln & Herndon was carried on in a primitive sort of way. They kept no books, and divided their fees. Sometimes when Herndon was away Lincoln would wrap up his share of a fee in a piece of paper and place it in his drawer, marking it with a pencil, " Case of *Roe v. Doe*—Herndon's half." In the Illinois Railroad case above alluded to, when the fee for \$5000 was eventually paid up, Lincoln came in and said : " Well, Billy ! " (his usual manner of addressing his partner), " here's our fee. Sit down and let me divide." Lincoln had the habit of keeping documents that he had in hand at the moment in the lining of his silk hat, which was generally speaking of a somewhat antiquated type. On one occasion, however, he had purchased a new one, and this led to some confusion, as important papers were left behind in its predecessor. In a letter to a fellow-lawyer in another town on this occasion, apologising for his failure to reply sooner, Lincoln wrote : " First, I have been very busy in the United States Court. Second, when I received the letter, I put it in my old hat, and, buying a new one the next day, the old one was set aside, and so the letter was lost sight of for a time." These are

not the sort of details that one usually gives to one's business correspondent, but that made no difference to Lincoln, who was throughout his life the most unconventional of men.

Lincoln's knowledge of the technicalities of the law was never his strong point, and he was liable to lose cases which turned on legal technicalities rather than on abstract justice or common sense. His mind was one that worked slowly, and required full time for preparation and to "get the hang" of a case. He suffered, too, through his lack of method, but no one was better in getting and holding the ear of a jury. The law, however, was always the second string to Lincoln's bow, and as far as his own inclination was concerned he looked upon it rather as a means to an end, even though, for several years of his life, it seemed that the end he had in view might have to be abandoned. In spite, however, of this interlude, Lincoln persistently kept in touch with the political world. Politics was his first and last love, and the time was now about to arrive when politics was destined once more to claim his entire energies.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

It is quite an open question whether Lincoln would ever have figured prominently again in American political life, if it had not been for the revival in an acute form of the dispute between North and South with reference to the question of the extension of slavery in the American Territories. In order to understand the position that this question occupied in American politics, it will be necessary to take a brief survey of the history of the subject in its earlier stages.

The original founders of the American Commonwealth were generally speaking opposed to slavery and anxious to secure its abolition. Among these may be included the first four Presidents of the Union: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison. The Declaration of Independence contained its implicit repudiation. Before the breach with the mother country, several of the American Colonies had desired to suppress it, but the British Government of the day had intervened. In 1774 a convention of all the colonies voted "that the

abolition of domestic slavery is the greatest object of desire in these colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state. But previous to the enfranchisement of the slaves in law, it is necessary to exclude all further importation from Africa." Jefferson especially was untiring in his efforts to put a stop to the institution. "I tremble for my country," he wrote, "when I think of the negro, and remember that God is just."

In 1784 the North-West Territory was ceded by Virginia to the pre-Union Congress. When this was done, Jefferson succeeded in securing the passing of an ordinance by which slavery was excluded from the soil of this Territory and the States into which this was subsequently broken up, *i.e.* Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, which thus became, *ipso facto*, free States. The slave-trade from Africa was abolished by Congress on 1st January 1808. Seven of the original thirteen States of the Union, and also Vermont, the fourteenth State, had abolished slavery by 1805. It will be seen, therefore, that in the early days of the Union slavery to all appearance was in a fair way of gradual extinction. The value, however, of slave labour for the cotton industry, which made rapid strides about the end of the eighteenth century, led to a serious set-back to the Emancipation Movement, and greatly increased the favour with which slavery was regarded in the Southern States, where this industry was pre-

dominant. In consequence, the strong support of the North to measures favourable to its extinction was counteracted by the interest of the South in its perpetuation. In 1820 the dispute between North and South over this matter reached a crisis. It was a question of the admission to the Union of the new State of Missouri, which had been carved out of the French territory purchased from Napoleon. The Northern senators and members of Congress demanded, in framing the new Constitution, that it should provide for the gradual extinction of slavery in the State. The representatives of the South were determined that slavery should be allowed. Assisted by the votes of several of the Northern members, they succeeded in carrying their point. Missouri was accordingly admitted to the Union as a slave State, while Maine was admitted about the same time as a free State, thus counterbalancing the gain of the South. It was, however, felt necessary that disputes of the kind should be avoided in future, and accordingly what was termed the Missouri Compromise was arrived at. By this agreement it was enacted that ever after slavery should be unlawful north of lat.  $36^{\circ} 30'$  and lawful south of it. While this was on the face of it a concession to the slave-owning States, it was, on the other hand, a guarantee to the opponents of slavery that all States subsequently formed north of the latitude in question should have free con-

stitutions. It was hoped on both sides that the Compromise would prevent the slavery question from ever again threatening the Union with possible disruption. For thirty-four years this compact was observed. The rescinding of it in 1854 at the instance of Stephen Douglas proved to be the turning-point of Lincoln's career, and led within seven years to the outbreak of the American Civil War.

The occasion of this momentous repeal was a Bill which dealt with the government of Kansas and Nebraska, and their admission as States to the Union. Stephen Douglas moved that the people of these States should be empowered to decide for themselves whether they would allow slavery or not. As this was contrary to the terms of the Missouri Compromise, it involved the Bill repealing this in set form. As the Compromise in question had come to be regarded, at least in the North, as one of the pillars of the Constitution, the motion naturally created extraordinary excitement. Douglas, however, was successful in carrying his point, and President Pierce offered no opposition. Douglas had always taken up the position that in the matter of slavery he was frankly indifferent. He had said on one occasion that in any question between white men and negroes he was on the side of the white men, and on any question between negroes and crocodiles he was on the side of the negroes.



One result of the passing of this Bill was a struggle between the contending parties to win Kansas for slavery or for freedom. It soon appeared, however, to the intense annoyance of the defenders of slavery, that the party of freedom in this State would win hands down. In spite of this, an attempt was actually made to impose the slave system on Kansas against the will of the majority. This, however, was defeated, and indeed Douglas himself revolted against this open defiance of the principle of the sovereignty of the people, which he had defended as the justification for the attitude he had adopted in his Bill.

A further consequence of the passing of this measure was the disruption of the old Whig party, to which Lincoln had so far belonged. The political struggle was obviously now between those who were in favour of the extension of slavery in the States, and those who were determined to prevent any such extension. The Whig party had throughout been a party of compromise, and had never taken any firm line in the matter, though anxious as far as might be to prevent slavery getting the upper hand. It was obvious that a party holding such indefinite views on the great question of the day had no chance of any strong popular support either from one side or the other. The majority of the Democrats were prepared to endorse the views of the population of the slave States, from which they were in the main recruited. There

was, however, a considerable section of this party which revolted from it when it became manifest that it was likely to be identified definitely with pro-slavery opinions. Accordingly it became necessary to found a new party which should stand for the restriction of slavery and its gradual abolition. Thus arose the great Republican party, which from that day to this has remained one of the two political parties of the Union. The party in question was recruited in the main from those of the old Whig party who felt that the Whigs had not taken a strong enough line on the question at issue. It also had the support of the revolting Northern Democrats. When in 1854 Lincoln returned to political life it was as one of the founders of this new party.

Stephen Douglas in the autumn of 1854 came to Springfield to attend the State Agricultural Fair, and, in view of his prominent position in political life and his standing as United States Senator, he was made the lion of the occasion. He availed himself of the opportunity to make a speech justifying the action of Congress in connection with the Bill which involved the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Lincoln about the same time had taken the field on behalf of Richard Yates, who was then standing for Congress. The opponents of the appeal called upon Lincoln to reply to Douglas. He did this in a speech in which he was successful in carrying almost his



entire audience with him. Douglas himself was present, and rose to his feet on several occasions to reply to Lincoln's criticisms and arguments. He found these so difficult to deal with that he finally asked for permission to reply in a set speech. Twelve days later Lincoln and Douglas met by arrangement on the same platform at Peoria, Lincoln allowing Douglas to make the first and closing speeches, while he himself merely claimed the right of replying to his first address. This speech again created an immense impression, and accentuated the rivalry between Lincoln and Douglas, who it was understood would shortly be contesting a seat in the United States Senate on behalf of the Democratic and Republican parties respectively. Writing of this speech of Lincoln's, Horace White, afterwards editor of the *New York Evening Post*, who was present on the occasion, said :—

“ I was then in the employ of the *Chicago Evening Journal*. I had been sent to Springfield to report the political doings of State Fair Week for that paper. Thus it came about that I occupied a front seat in the Representatives' Hall when Mr Lincoln delivered the speech in question. The impression made upon me by the orator was quite overpowering. I had not heard much political speaking up to that time. I have heard a great deal since. I have never heard anything since, either by Mr Lincoln or by anybody, that I would put on a higher plane of oratory. All the strings that play upon the human heart and understanding were touched with

masterly skill and force, while beyond and above all skill was the overwhelming conviction pressed upon the audience that the speaker himself was charged with an irresistible and inspiring duty to his fellow-men. Having since then heard all the great speakers of the country, I award the palm to Mr Lincoln as the one who, although not first in all respects, would bring more men of doubtful or hostile leanings around to his way of thinking, by talking to them on a platform, than any other."

Stephen Douglas, who at this time was Lincoln's great rival, had risen from as humble circumstances as Lincoln himself ; but in the first instance his progress in the political world had been far more rapid than that of his opponent. As a youth he was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker in Vermont, and had studied law under similar difficulties and disadvantages to the future President. His ready wit and remarkable aptitude, however, quickly overcame these, and he was admitted to the bar at the early age of twenty-one. Then, coming to Springfield with nothing but his talents and his address to his credit, and without political support, in spite of these drawbacks he successfully contested for the office of State Attorney with John J. Hardin, one of the most successful lawyers of the State. Shortly after this he was elected to the Legislature on the Democratic side. In 1837 he obtained from President van Buren the appointment of Registrar of the Public Land Office, and settled definitely at Springfield. The same year

he was nominated for Congress in opposition to John T. Stuart, Lincoln's first law partner, who defeated him on this occasion by fourteen votes. No two men could have offered a greater contrast than Douglas and Lincoln. Douglas was short and square built, possessed an attractive and ingratiating manner, and a personal magnetism which has been described as almost irresistible. His voice was rich and remarkable for its compass. His skill as an orator and debater was unrivalled. He was self-reliant and troubled by few political scruples. Lincoln was more than a foot taller than his rival. He was ungainly and awkward. His voice when first he began to speak was harsh and shrill, and he had none of the qualities which tend to general popularity and social favour. But he impressed all who heard him speak by his honesty of purpose and the depth and sincerity of his political convictions. While Douglas was by far the more plausible of the two in his style of oratory, and electrified his hearers with his eloquence, Lincoln convinced his audience by the sheer force of logic. Lincoln's style of speaking and the peculiarities of his delivery, as contrasted with those of Douglas, are thus described by one of his political friends :—

“ When standing erect he was six feet four inches high. He was lean in flesh and ungainly in figure ; thin through the chest, and hence slightly stoop-shouldered. When he arose to address courts, juries, or crowds of people his

body inclined forward to a slight degree. At first he was very awkward, and it seemed a real labour to adjust himself to the surroundings. He struggled for a time under a feeling of apparent diffidence and sensitiveness, and these only added to his awkwardness. When he began speaking his voice was shrill, piping, and unpleasant. His manner, his attitude, his dark, yellow face wrinkled and dry, his oddity of pose, his diffident movements—everything seemed to be against him; but only for a short time. After having arisen, he generally placed his hands behind him, the back of his left hand in the palm of his right, the thumb and fingers of his right hand clasped around the left arm at the wrist. For a few moments he played the combination of awkwardness, sensitiveness, and diffidence. As he proceeded he became somewhat animated, and to keep in harmony with his growing warmth his hands relaxed their grasp and fell to his side. Presently he clasped them in front of him, interlocking his fingers, one thumb meanwhile chasing the other. His speech now requiring more emphatic utterance, his fingers unlocked and his hands fell apart. His left arm was thrown behind, the back of his hand resting against his body, his right hand seeking his side. By this time he had gained sufficient composure, and his real speech began. He did not gesticulate as much with his hands as he did with his head. He used the latter frequently, throwing it with vim this way and that. This movement was a significant one when he sought to enforce his statement. It sometimes came with a quick jerk, as if throwing off electric sparks into combustible material. He never sawed the air nor rent space into tatters and rags, as some orators do. He never acted for stage effect. He was cool, considerate, reflective—in time self-possessed and self-reliant. His style was clear, terse, and compact. In argument he was logical, demonstra-

tive, and fair. He was careless of his dress, and his clothes, instead of fitting, as did the garments of Douglas on the latter's well-rounded form, hung loosely on his huge frame."

What was practically the official inauguration of the new Republican party took place at Bloomington, in the spring of 1856. This Bloomington Convention has always been remembered as the occasion of what is usually termed "Lincoln's lost speech."

"The Convention" (says William Eleroy Curtis), "which was composed of former members of all political parties, had adopted the name Republican, had taken extreme grounds against slavery, and had launched a new political organisation; but it contained many discordant, envious, and hostile elements. Those who had watched the proceedings were anxious and apprehensive of dissension and jealousy, and Lincoln, with his acute political perceptions, realised the danger, perhaps, more keenly than any other man in the assembly. He saw before him a group of earnest, zealous, sincere men, willing to make tremendous sacrifices and undertake titanic tasks, but at the same time most of them clung to their own theories and advocated their individual methods with a tenacity that promised to defeat their common purpose. Therefore, when he arose in response to the unanimous demand for a speech from the great orator of Springfield, his soul was flooded with a desire and a purpose to harmonise and amalgamate the patriotic emotions of his associates. He realised that it was a crisis in the history of his country, and rose to the full height of the occasion.

"Those who were present say that at first he spoke slowly, cautiously, and in a monotone; but gradually his



words grew in force and intensity until he swept the discordant souls of the assembly together and his hearers 'arose from their chairs with pale faces and quivering lips and pressed unconsciously towards him.' His influence was irresistible. Even the trained reporters, accustomed to witness the most touching and impressive scenes with the indifference of their profession, dropped their pencils, and what was perhaps the greatest speech of Lincoln's entire career was unreported."

Hence the speech became popularly known as "Lincoln's lost speech," and no record was kept of words that had the effect of electrifying a political audience in a manner in which no audience of the kind has ever, perhaps, been carried away before or since. Fragments of the speech were quoted from memory by his hearers, but Lincoln himself, though constantly appealed to by numerous newspapers to reproduce his words, declared his inability to do so. Joseph Medill, subsequently editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, narrates how he took up his pencil in the ordinary way to take shorthand notes of the speech, but completely forgot himself after the first ten minutes, so entirely was he absorbed by the magnetic oratory of the speaker. He states how, walking out of the room in a sort of hypnotic trance, after Lincoln had sat down, it suddenly flashed through his mind that he had no report to hand to the *Tribune*. His feeling of dismay, however, at this occurrence was somewhat mitigated when he discovered that all the other newspaper men present were in the same predicament, the

excitement having carried away the entire audience, including the reporters themselves.

It was in the Presidential contest of this year (1856) that the first trial of strength took place between the new Republicans and the Democratic party, which had hitherto been opposed to the old Whigs. The Republicans chose as their candidate General Fremont, a Southerner of French origin, while the Democratic candidate was James Buchanan, of Vermont, a man more noted for his caution and respectability than for any more positive virtues. Although Buchanan was elected, the show made by the Republicans at the polls was far better than they had anticipated, and the result seemed to encourage their hopes that at the next election they might carry their own nominee. Things, however, did not in all directions run smoothly for the new party. In 1857 the celebrated Dred Scott case came to a head, and the ruling of the Supreme Court in this notable trial proved a severe blow to the prospects of the Republicans.

Dred Scott was a negro who, before the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, had been taken by his master into Nebraska. Hence he claimed that by virtue of this agreement he became, *ipso facto*, a free man. If so, he was entitled to sue his master in a Federal Court, as he was in that case a citizen of Missouri. The question for the Supreme Court to decide was, therefore, whether Dred Scott was a citizen. The subsidiary question was neces-



sarily raised—whether Dred Scott was a free man. The judgment was pronounced by Chief Justice Roger Taney, and concurred in by a majority of the justices in the Supreme Court of the United States, five of his colleagues concurring and two only dissenting. The pronouncement amounted to a decision that Dred Scott was not a citizen, and went on to state that he also was not free, in view of the fact that the Missouri Compromise had all along been unconstitutional and void, the exclusion of slavery from any portion of the Territories being contrary to the established Constitution of the American Commonwealth.

The question that arose was the intention of the framers of the Constitution and the authors of the Declaration of Independence. Judge Taney laid it down that these men had hardly counted negroes as human at all, and used words such as “men,” “persons,” “citizens” in a sense which necessarily excluded the negro. The fact is, however, that the Constitution in question was formulated by a number of States, in some of which negroes were actually at that time exercising the full rights of citizens. All the earlier Presidents of the United States had acted on the belief that Congress had the power to allow or forbid slavery in the Territories, and the point had been universally recognised and admitted throughout the history of the American Republic until Calhoun first disputed it some eight or ten years previously, in his defence of slavery

in Southern States. Justices M'Lean and Curtis put forward arguments in opposition to those of the Chief Justice, and the majority of the American legal profession were disposed to call in question the legality of this memorable decision. In spite of this, the judgment of the Supreme Court could not lightly be set aside, and the Republicans, who had based their programme on their constitutional position, were, for the time being, thrown into much confusion and embarrassment.

In 1856, and again in 1858, Lincoln became Senatorial candidate for the State of Illinois. American Senators are elected by the Legislatures of their States, and a Senator to be elected must have an absolute majority. Thus the name that heads the poll at the first ballot is not necessarily the one elected. In the election for 1856 Lincoln headed the first ballot, but he soon realised that unless his friends transferred their votes to Lynam Trumbull, a Democrat, who, however, was also a sound opponent of slavery, a supporter of Douglas would probably win the election. Sacrificing, therefore, his own personal interests, he induced his friends to vote for Trumbull and thus secure his absolute majority. When a Senatorial vacancy again occurred two years later, Douglas himself became the candidate of the Democrats, and Lincoln was at once recognised as his only possible opponent. The struggle between these two men for the Senatorial vacancy in Illinois was destined to prove of

historical importance. The question that was at issue in connection with it was whether the institution of slavery was to be tolerated beyond its present limits, or whether it was to be left simply for the voters of each new State to determine as they thought fit. Lincoln, while recognising that slavery must be tolerated in the present existing Slave States, from the necessities of the Union, was resolute against its extension, and was equally resolute in the attitude he maintained that slavery, whenever or however tolerated under stress of circumstances, must be recognised as a violation of eternal right. "We have temporised with it," he said in one of his speeches, "from the necessities of our condition ; but as sure as God reigns, and school children read, that black, foul lie can never be consummated into God's hallowed truth."

A further question, destined shortly after to assume an even more prominent position than the question of slavery, was now becoming mixed up with this issue. If slavery were to be placed under a sort of interdict, even though tacitly permitted in certain States of the Union, what attitude would these same Slave States take up ? Would they consent to remain within the four corners of the Union under such circumstances ? This doubt was raised in the minds of many whose hostility to slavery from conscientious motives was beyond dispute, but who dreaded, before all else, to see a break-up of the Union. There were not a few, accordingly,

whose natural sympathies were with Lincoln, who yet preferred to side with Douglas and the party of indifference, rather than run so grave a risk to the integrity of the Commonwealth. It was Lincoln's great distinction that he was throughout absolutely opposed to any compromise or tampering with the great principle involved. The central idea of the founders of the Union was, he maintained, the equality of man, and a steady approximation to this, as far as circumstances and conditions would allow, was the basis and corner-stone of the American Constitution.

Lincoln had to contend against a natural prejudice, "a natural disgust," as he termed it, "in the minds of nearly all white people at the idea of an indiscriminate amalgamation of the white and black men." His opponents were constantly urging that the logical outcome of his principles would be the encouragement of mixed marriages between the two races. Lincoln lost no opportunity of attacking this line of argument. "I protest," he said, "against the counterfeit logic which says that since I do not want a negro woman for my slave, I must necessarily want her for my wife. I may want her for neither. I may simply let her alone. In some respects she is certainly not my equal; but in her natural right to eat the bread which she has earned by the sweat of her brow, she is my equal and the equal of any man." Lincoln at this time entirely repudiated the title of Abolitionist,

and firmly declined to support the Abolitionists in their efforts to get slavery declared illegal throughout the whole of the United States. The Slave States had entered the Union under specific conditions, and the maintenance of slavery within their borders was one of them. These conditions must be recognised, however regrettable such recognition might be. "We grant," he said, "a Fugitive Slave Law because it is so nominated in the bond." But as to the eternal principle of right and wrong Lincoln would allow no paltering. "If slavery," he said, "is not wrong, nothing is wrong." And wherever, therefore, it was not "nominated in the bond," slavery must be prevented. In a speech delivered at a slightly later date, and one phrase in which was quoted and remembered throughout the length and breadth of America, he declared :—

"We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object, and confident promise, of putting an end to slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of



ultimate extinction ; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become lawful alike in all the States, old as well as new—North as well as South.”

No well-known public man in America had ever spoken so boldly on the question of slavery, had ever voiced the issue so clearly. Lincoln's Republican supporters were afraid of the effect on public opinion of so frank and outspoken a pronouncement. Lincoln, however, saw more clearly than they, in realising that the issue must be faced, and that success at the polls would be the lot of the party who took the firm stand and refused to temporise. To Herndon, himself an Abolitionist, when he questioned whether the passage was politic, Lincoln said, “I would rather be defeated with this expression in my speech than be victorious without it.”

Of the shrewdness of Lincoln's judgment in matters political, of his capacity for gauging the sentiments and attitude of the man in the street, and his sagacity in judging the effects of political moves, there are no two opinions. An Illinois political wirepuller gives him this testimony : “He was one of the shrewdest politicians in the State. Nobody had more experience in that way. Nobody knew better what was passing in the minds of the people. Nobody knew better how to turn things to advantage politically.” At the same time, he adds that he could not cheat people out of their votes any more than he could out of their money.

Lincoln's great political foresight was never more conspicuously shown than in his contest with Douglas in 1858. One of the incidents of this campaign, which involved almost daily speeches before public audiences for the two great protagonists during a period of some three months, was a series of questions which either party proposed for the other to answer by way of establishing the precise attitude which his opponent took up. Douglas began by propounding a list of questions for Lincoln to reply to, his object being to commit him to strong Abolitionist doctrines, which he felt confident would lose him public support. Thus, for instance, he wanted to know whether Lincoln was pledged to the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, to resist the admission of negro Slave States, to the prohibition of the slave-trade between the States, and to the prohibition of slavery in the Territories. Lincoln replied that he was pledged to no proposition except the prohibition of slavery in all the Territories. He then propounded to Douglas four questions, on the second of which the very gravest issues hung. "Can," he asked, "the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits, prior to the formation of a State Constitution?" His friends warned Lincoln that his putting this question would give Douglas the opportunity he desired to set himself right with the people of Illinois and to secure his



re-election as Senator. To this Lincoln rejoined : " I am killing larger game. If Douglas answers, he can never be President ; and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." Chief Justice Taney's judgment on the Dred Scott case had indeed caused great embarrassment to the Republican party. It had, however, created also a serious difficulty for Douglas. In view of the attitude he had adopted, he was bound to treat this decision as right ; but if so, Congress had not the power to prohibit slavery in a Territory ; nor indeed was it clear how a Territorial Legislature whose authority was delegated by Congress could possess this power either. What, then, became of the point on which Douglas had laid so much stress, that each State should decide for itself whether it would admit slavery or not ? To this question Douglas replied :

" It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a Territory under the Constitution ; the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it, as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere unless it is supported by local police regulations. Those police regulations can only be established by the local Legislature, and if the people are opposed to slavery they will elect representatives to that body who will, by unfriendly legislation, effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favour its extension."

This reply, as Douglas confidently anticipated, gave satisfaction to his Illinois supporters, and

ensured his re-election to the Senate. But it gave offence to the out-and-out pro-slavery men in the Southern States, without whose support Douglas could not win as Democratic candidate for the Presidency. Henceforth, by the Southern leaders, Douglas was regarded as suspect, and they made up their minds that, whatever happened, he should not become President. This, in spite of the fact that had he met with the whole-hearted support of the Democratic party, his election was almost a fore-gone conclusion. The situation thus brought about rendered the return of a Republican President at the next election in the highest degree probable. But who this President was likely to be was still a matter of very considerable doubt, and Lincoln himself, despite the leading rôle he had taken in the creation of the Republican party, was hardly thought of in this connection. He had, indeed, only been a member of Congress for two years, and had never occupied any important official position. Seward, who was the popular favourite for the nomination, had been Governor of New York State. He had been a staunch opponent of compromise in the matter of slavery and had enjoyed a long and honourable political career. Other leaders of the party besides Seward were not without some show of justification in considering that their claims to the position of President were greater than Lincoln's. Among these was Chase, who had been Governor of Ohio, and who after-

wards became Secretary of the Treasury during Lincoln's first administration, or, as we should call it in England, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Both afterwards felt very sore at the preference accorded to Lincoln, and Chase never got over his resentment at what he considered a slight to his superior talents and qualifications. Certain, however, of Lincoln's friends had made up their minds that Lincoln was the right person for the Presidency.

## CHAPTER VI

### FROM PRAIRIE POLITICIAN TO PRESIDENT

THE electric condition of the political atmosphere in connection with the slavery question, and the violent passions aroused on both sides in this controversy, resulted about this time in a number of outbreaks of greater or lesser consequence in various parts of America. The most noteworthy of these was the celebrated raid of John Brown and his band of Abolitionists and negroes upon the Government Arsenal at Harper's Ferry in Virginia. John Brown was by religion a Puritan of the *Mayflower* brand, and he was in some sense the Garibaldi of the anti-slavery battle, the free-lance and extremist who was determined to force the issue at all hazards, without regard to the laws of society or the State. In the disturbances in Kansas in connection with the new constitution for that State and the struggle to prevent a slave constitution being forced upon it, John Brown had taken a foremost part. He had already engaged in local battles and forays, in which blood had been

shed on both sides. In October 1859 he engaged in a more daring and ambitious enterprise by seizing upon the State Arsenal at Harper's Ferry. This exploit, however, was fated to be his last. Things had reached a point at which it was necessary for the State to intervene by armed force. Robert Lee, afterwards destined to win fame as the noted Southern general, took command of the troops, and resistance was very soon brought to an end. John Brown fought to the last. Two of his sons were slain in the encounter, and he himself was desperately wounded. His object had been doubtless to obtain the wherewithal to free further slaves by force; but the mad enterprise had the only possible termination. Brown was legally tried and hanged. No State can afford to wink at those who take the law into their own hands. At the same time his death aroused widespread indignation and sympathy; for it was felt that, however misguided he had been, he had died in a noble cause and for conscience sake. He was asked shortly before his death how he justified his acts. In reply to his interlocutor he observed: "I think, my friend, you are guilty of a great wrong against God and humanity—I say it without wishing to be offensive,—and it would be perfectly right for anyone to interfere with you so far as to free those you wilfully and wickedly hold in bondage. I think I did right, and that others will do right who interfere

with you at any time and at all times." He wrote to a friend that he rejoiced like Paul, for if they killed him it would greatly advance the cause of Christ. Longfellow, in an entry in his Diary for Friday, 2nd December 1859, the day on which John Brown was hanged, voiced a very widespread feeling throughout the Northern States of America : "This will be a great day in our history ; the date of a new revolution quite as much needed as the old one. Even now, as I write, they are leading old John Brown to execution in Virginia for attempting to rescue slaves. This is sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind, which will soon come."

Coming events were indeed already beginning to cast their shadows before, and those with foresight could read the signs of the times and realise how ominous were the clouds that were gathering in all quarters of the political sky. The attitude of Lincoln towards John Brown was somewhat similar to that of Cavour to Garibaldi. Lincoln was the last man to look with favour on open defiance of the law. He had alienated the Abolitionists by his insistence on adhering to the terms of the Union, by which slavery was admitted in certain States. He had now no word of sympathy for the misguided enthusiast who imagined that he had some divine commission to liberate the slave. This view he expressed in his celebrated Cooper Institute Speech, and though to some, at a time when passions were so intensely aroused, it must



have struck a jarring note, it was entirely true to the character of the man who made it, and in keeping with his whole outlook upon life and his conception of the duty of man to man. This Cooper Institute Speech, like several other of Lincoln's famous orations, marks an important turning-point in his political career. It was in a sense his introduction to the intellectual aristocracy of the Eastern States, who had hitherto merely heard rumours of him as a prairie politician and witty stump orator, with an unrivalled reputation for telling risky stories. "In October 1859," says Herndon, "he came rushing into the office one morning with a letter from New York City, inviting him to deliver a lecture there, and asked my advice, and that of other friends, as to the subject and character of his address. We all recommended a speech on the political situation. He accepted the invitation of the New York committee, at the same time notifying them that his speech would deal entirely with political questions, and fixing a day late in February as the most convenient time. Meanwhile he spent the intervening time in careful preparation."

It was an anxious occasion for Lincoln. The audience he was to meet in New York would include among its members many of the best known men of the day, the foremost representatives of the wealthy and fashionable society of the greatest city of the Union. He himself was not without



considerable misgiving as to the reception with which he was likely to meet. The result showed that he had gauged rightly the temper of his audience. He avoided all attempt at rhetorical display or impassioned oratory, and studied to make appeal to the reason rather than to the emotions of his listeners. The speech was characterised by the temperateness of its tone and the forcible and logical manner in which he drove home his points on the leading question of the day. It was widely reported in full in the New York press, and praised for its "great apparent candour and great fairness." The late Joseph Choate, for some years American Ambassador in London, who was present on the occasion, has left a record of his impressions of the speech and the speaker :<sup>1</sup>—

"It is now," he said, "forty years since I first saw and heard Abraham Lincoln, but the impression which he left on my mind is ineffaceable. After his great successes in the West, he came to New York to make a political address. He appeared in every sense of the word like one of the plain people among whom he loved to be counted. At first sight there was nothing impressive or imposing about him, except that his great stature singled him out from the crowd ; his clothes hung awkwardly on his giant frame, his face was of a dark pallor, without the slightest tinge of colour ; his seamed and rugged features bore the furrows of hardship and struggle ; his deep-set eyes looked sad and anxious ; his countenance in repose gave little evidence of that brain-power which had raised him from

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<sup>1</sup> In an address given at Edinburgh in 1900.

the lowest to the highest station among his countrymen. . . .

“It was a great audience, including all the noted men—all the learned and cultured—of his party in New York : editors, clergymen, statesmen, lawyers, merchants, critics. They were all very curious to hear him. His fame as a powerful speaker had preceded him, and exaggerated rumour of his wit had reached the East. When Mr Bryant presented him on the high platform of the Cooper Institute, a vast sea of eager, upturned faces greeted him, full of intense curiosity to see what this rude child of the people was like. He was equal to the occasion. When he spoke he was transformed ; his eye kindled, his voice rang, his face shone and seemed to light up the whole assembly. For an hour and a half he held his audience in the hollow of his hand. His style of speech and manner of delivery were severely simple. What Lowell called ‘the grand simplicities of the Bible,’ with which he was so familiar, were reflected in his discourse. With no attempt at ornament or rhetoric, without parade or pretence, he spoke straight to the point. If any came expecting the turgid eloquence or the ribaldry of the frontier, they must have been startled at the earnest and sincere purity of his utterances. . . .

“He spoke upon the theme which he had mastered so thoroughly. He demonstrated by copious historical proofs and masterly logic that the Fathers who created the Constitution in order to form a more perfect union, to establish justice, and to secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity, intended to empower the Federal Government to exclude slavery from the Territories. In the kindest spirit, he protested against the avowed threat of the Southern States to destroy the Union if, in order to secure freedom in those vast regions, out of which future States were to be carved, a Republican

President were elected. . . . He concluded with this telling sentence: 'Let us have faith that right makes right, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.'"

Following his address at the Cooper Institute, Lincoln travelled to New England to visit his son Robert, who was then at college, and in answer to many invitations, spoke at a number of places in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire, and was everywhere very favourably received, both by the public and the press.

The *Manchester Mirror*, in an editorial dealing with one of the local addresses, thus commented on his appearance and manner of delivery: "For the first half-hour his opponents would agree with every word he uttered, and from that point he would lead them off little by little until it seemed as if he had got them all into his fold. He is far from prepossessing in personal appearance, and his voice is disagreeable, yet he wins your attention from the start. He indulges in no flowers of rhetoric, but displays more shrewdness and more knowledge of the masses of mankind than any public speaker we have heard since Long Jim Wilson left for California."

The very favourable impression that Lincoln had made in New York and the New England States generally reacted upon his prospects in Illinois, and on his return it became clear to him that the Presidential nomination was within his

reach if he chose to put himself out to obtain it. After a momentary hesitation, he gave his friends permission to place his name in the field if they thought proper to do so. He was asked whether, in the event of the nomination for President not being obtainable, he would accept the post of Vice-President, which he declined to do. His friends, prominent among whom were Judges Logan and David Davis, took up the matter with enthusiasm. The Illinois State Convention shortly after met at Decatur on the 9th and 10th May, and, appointing George Logan the Springfield delegate, instructed for Lincoln.

An incident at the Decatur Convention has won almost as much celebrity in its way as the adventure of King Alfred with the cakes. While the meeting was being held, John Hanks, Lincoln's old friend and cousin, suddenly appeared bringing in two historic rails which he declared he and Lincoln had made in their early days in the Sangamon Bottom in 1830. These were received with great cheering and applause by the Convention, and the Sangamon rails were associated with the name of Lincoln ever after, their hero being chaffingly alluded to as the "rail-splitter." A delegate at the Convention declared that these rails would be symbolical of the issue of the coming contest as between free and slave labour. Lincoln regarded them when they were brought in with embarrassed amusement. Finally, in response to

loud calls, he observed : “ Gentlemen, I suppose you want to know something about those things. Well, the truth is, John Hanks and I did make rails in the Sangamon Bottom. I do not know whether we made those rails or not. Fact is, I do not think they are a credit to the makers. But I do know this : I made rails then, and I think I could make better ones than these now.”

A week later the delegates gathered from the various States for the great political Convention at Chicago for the nomination of the Republican candidate for the Presidency. The strong probability that whoever was nominated at this Convention would become President of the United States at its most critical period since the foundation of the Union gave the meeting unprecedented importance. Lincoln had given Judge Logan a letter authorising him to withdraw his name whenever his friends deemed such action necessary or proper. Davis was the business manager, and any negotiations that were entered into passed through his hands. Lincoln instructed him to make no contracts that would bind him, a request to which Davis did not find it possible strictly to adhere. It soon became obvious that the contest would be narrowed down to a neck-and-neck race between Seward and Lincoln. No one else was seriously in the running. On the first ballot Seward led, followed at no very great distance by Lincoln. The second ballot showed that

Lincoln had gained appreciably on his rival, but Seward was still first favourite. At the third ballot Carter of Ohio transferred his support to the Lincoln candidature, enabling Lincoln easily to obtain the requisite majority. Meanwhile he himself remained at Springfield, waiting the latest news from Chicago at the office of the *Springfield Journal*. He was sitting there in an armchair when the news of his nomination reached him. His first anxiety was to get up and leave the newspaper office "to tell a little woman down the street the news." Needless to say, he was overwhelmed with congratulations by his Illinois friends; and the next day the Committee from the Chicago Convention, with George Ashmun of Massachusetts at its head, called to give formal notice of his nomination. The Republican platform amounted to a declaration (which was warmly endorsed by Lincoln) "that the new dogma that the Constitution carries slavery into all the Territories is a dangerous political heresy, revolutionary in tendency, and subversive of the peace and harmony of the country. That the normal condition of all the Territories is that of Freedom. That neither Congress, the Territorial Legislature, nor any individual can give legal existence to slavery in any Territory. That the reopening of the slave trade would be a crime against humanity."

After his nomination Lincoln turned over his law practice to his partner, W. H. Herndon, and



engaged as his private secretary a clerk in the office of the Secretary of State, of the name of John G. Nicolay, who afterwards collaborated in the production of the standard Life of the great President. He was given the use of the Governor's room at the State House for an office, and it was from this as headquarters that Lincoln conducted his own presidential campaign. His activities were throughout devoted to harmonising the rather numerous discords and local dissensions in the Republican party, for which his tact and good temper specially adapted him. His foresight as regards the probable moves of his opponents in the political campaign was remarkable and unique. He was, however, over-sanguine in his belief that the South would not have recourse to the arbitrament of arms at the last resort. "The people of the South," he said, "have too much sense to attempt the ruining of the Government." His own cool and calculating nature made it difficult for him to realise the extent to which passions had been aroused in the Southern States. He attempted constantly to reassure the slave-owning States as regards the attitude likely to be taken by a Republican administration. "Do the people of the South," he asked in a letter to Alexander Stephens, "really entertain fears that a Republican administration would directly or indirectly interfere with the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend—and still, I hope, not an enemy,—there is



no cause for such fears. The South would be in no greater danger in this respect than in the days of Washington. I suppose, however, that this does not meet the case. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended ; while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That, I suppose, is the rub." The election took place on 6th November 1860. There were four competitors : Lincoln, for the Republicans ; Douglas, for the Democrats ; Breckenridge, for the Slave-owners ; and Bell, for the old Whigs, now quite a forlorn hope. The popular vote gave Lincoln a majority of some 600,000 over Douglas, his nearest rival ; but in the voting of the Electoral College, Lincoln received an absolute majority of 180 votes, his nearest competitor being Breckenridge, with 72. Springfield, needless to say, was *en fête* on receipt of the news of the declaration of the poll. Lincoln was called upon for a speech, but he merely thanked his supporters for their congratulations and observed : " In all our rejoicing let us neither express nor cherish any hard feeling towards any citizen who has differed from us. Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling." Lincoln's habitual caution was indeed never more strongly shown than in what he said and what he refrained from saying at this critical moment of his country's history.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF THE WAR

FOR the next four months, according to the rules of the United States Constitution, Lincoln found his hands tied. He was President-elect, but did not come into office until the succeeding March. In view of the active steps for secession which were at once taken by the South as soon as the news of his election became known, this position was a singularly embarrassing one, as he had no means of taking action himself, and the outgoing President was also unwilling to take any steps which might, as he feared, precipitate a conflict. Appeals came to him from all quarters, but naturally he could do nothing. To an old friend who came to see him at Springfield he observed sadly : " I suppose you have forgotten the trial down in Montgomery County, where your partner gave away your case in his opening speech. I saw you motioning to him, and how uneasy you were ; but you could not stop him. And that is just the way with Buchanan and me. He is giving away the case, and I cannot stop him."

One effort was made for a joint conference of the President and the President-elect on the situation ; but Lincoln realised the danger that might arise through thus compromising himself in the matter without possessing the necessary power to act, and replied with a counter proposition which threw back upon the representatives of the seceding States the responsibility for opening hostilities. General Green came to Springfield in December, suggesting such a conference on behalf of President Buchanan. Lincoln listened to Green with courtesy and attention, and handed him a letter in which he stated that he did not desire any amendment to the Constitution, although he recognised the right of the American people to adopt one. That he believed in maintaining inviolate the rights of each State to control its own domestic institutions ; and that he considered the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory as the gravest of crimes. While these were his sentiments, he declined to consent to their publication unless the Senators from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas would sign a pledge "to suspend all action for the dismemberment of the Union until some act deemed to be violative of our rights shall be done by the incoming administration." Thus the negotiations fell through.

From the first Lincoln took up a most determined attitude with regard to the questions of secession and slavery. Of the former he said : "The right

of a State to secede is not an open or debatable question." With regard to the latter, he wrote to Robert Washburne as follows: "Prevent our friends from demoralising themselves and their cause by entertaining propositions for compromise of any sort on slavery extensions." And again to Seward he wrote: "I say now, as I have said all the while, that on the question of extending slavery I am inflexible. I am for no compromise which assists or permits the extension of the institution on soil owned by the nation."

Lincoln's attitude on both these questions was thus quite unmistakable from the first, and he never flinched or compromised throughout, or deviated in anyway from the position he had adopted. In America generally, however, there were all sorts and varieties of opinions with regard to both one question and the other. The South was determined to maintain slavery at all hazards, and freely quoted the Bible in its support, naming an earlier Abraham as one of its most undoubted supporters. The pulpit was thus brought in as a champion of an institution which outraged the very basic principles of Christianity. In the North there were many men like Stephen Douglas, who were indifferent in the matter. Then, again, there were the Abolitionists, who were determined to abolish slavery throughout the Union at whatever price, even if this involved the breaking up of the Union itself. These, however, were a comparatively small minority. The

large majority of the Northern voters took a very similar line to Lincoln, refusing to purchase the adhesion of the South by making any further concessions to the slave-owning States. A very much larger, indeed an overwhelming majority, were determined that under no circumstances whatever should the Union be dissolved, even if this involved all the horrors of civil war. The average Northerner looked upon the secession of a State or States from the Union as rebellion pure and simple. In the South, on the other hand, the Union was merely regarded as a federation which it would be regrettable to dissolve, but from which it was legitimate for any State, should it so desire, to withdraw at its own option.

On the question, thus, of the fundamental character of the Union itself, North and South were sharply divided. It is pertinent to ask which was in the right. There are two points of view from which this question may be answered. The first and most obvious is the historical standpoint, and to some, at first sight, this may seem to be the only inquiry that has a bearing on the matter at issue. Taking this point of view first, it is by no means clear that the original Constitution of the Union deprived the federating States of the right of secession. The intention doubtless was to form a permanent federation ; but there was no denial of the right of a State to secede at any subsequent period if it so chose, and if any such stipulation had been

then made it is somewhat doubtful if the federation could have been formed. Grave difficulties had to be overcome at the time in order to induce the several States to come together under one government. In order to reduce to a minimum the not inconsiderable opposition which existed in some of these States to bringing the federation into being, public declarations were made to the citizens of the most reluctant of the original States by their own representatives to the effect that if the federation proved detrimental to their interests it would be open to the States in question to withdraw. Though such statements were made without any real authority, they obviously expressed the view then held by many, and it is noteworthy that no trouble was taken to contradict them. It seems, indeed, that from the historical standpoint the case of the North for the enforcement of the Union was singularly weak.

Apart, however, from this historical question, there were and are certain general considerations in a case of the kind which are bound to have very grave weight with all serious statesmen and politicians. The fact is, as the Duke of Argyll in this country very plainly stated, "no government in the world can afford in practice to admit the right of secession of any part or portion of the country from its own allegiance." Lord Charnwood has put the case in his recent *Life of Abraham Lincoln* with admirable clearness: "At the best,"



he says, "if the States which adhered to the old Union had admitted the claim of the first seceding States to go, they could only have retained for themselves an insecure existence as a nation, threatened, at each fresh conflict of interest or sentiment, with a further disruption which could not upon any principle have been resisted." A nation must either tend to union or to disintegration. The nation which tends to union becomes year by year more definitely a single coherent whole, the several parts of which are unable to regard themselves as existent apart from the general commonwealth, any more than the different members of the human body can exist independently of the individual. Disintegration, on the other hand, once commenced, tends to further disintegration at an accelerated rate, and the total destruction of the national unity is the inevitable consequence. Had the North permitted the secession of the South, there was no guarantee that this would have involved a final settlement or that war might not have broken out at some subsequent date between their respective governments. In addition to this, the break-up of the Union, as Lincoln was not slow to point out, was a disaster to a larger cause, the cause of popular self-government. If the American Union should prove to be a failure, the greatest attempt that had ever been made in this direction would be an admitted fiasco and, following its failure, the principle of popular self-



government itself would inevitably receive a severe setback throughout the entire world. In fighting for the Union, the North were thus fighting for a vital principle, the importance of which lay far more in its own inherent nature than in any adventitious support which it might find in the precise wording of the original Constitution of the States.

With regard to the question of negro slavery, it is rare indeed nowadays to find anyone who is willing to defend this institution as morally justifiable ; but it is very common to meet people who will point out that the abolition of slavery in certain cases caused greater evils than it suppressed, and that among the negro slaves in the South the acquisition of a freedom to which they were not accustomed led, in not a few instances, to moral degeneration. In reply to this it may be said that no great social revolution can possibly be carried through without bringing about certain inevitable harmful results. The effect of any vast change in the social organism is always to produce certain individual cases of injustice or actual moral evil ; but this must not blind us to the general justice and beneficence of the change. No one will dispute the fact that there were many honourable and humane slave-owners in the South ; but it is none the less true that they were the instruments of an essentially evil and debasing system. The kindness and humanity of individual slave-owners was no real compensation for this. " Your children," exclaimed Lincoln,

“ may play with the little black children, but they must not play with his ”—*i.e.* the slave-dealer’s or the slave-driver’s. By this fact alone, as Lincoln was shrewd enough to point out, every decent man in the South joined in the condemnation of the very basis on which slavery rested. A stronger point could scarcely have been made. If the slave-dealer’s trade was an honourable one, why did the slave-owner turn his back upon him ?

In those days the work of political propagandism was little understood, otherwise it would seem almost incredible that the sympathy of the majority of English society was on the side of the South. The Englishman, however, was dependent on his Press, and in the matter of the Press of that day it must be admitted that he was not well served. Had it been purely a question of a war for the suppression of slavery, British sympathy must inevitably have been found on the other side ; but the issues were confused, and the average man in the street was puzzled to know what precisely the North was fighting for. That the South was fighting for the institution of slavery pure and simple, he positively refused to believe, and yet this was most unquestionably the case. The sympathy of men like Gladstone tended to be ever on the side of smaller nationalities, and he mistakenly looked upon the secession of the South as a rightful demand on their part for self-government according to their own ideas. It should also, perhaps, not be for-

gotten that Gladstone's own immediate ancestors were identified with the slave-trade, and it is hardly to be questioned that he regarded the institution with more leniency from this very cause, little though he would have been willing to admit it even to himself. John Bright, Tennyson, and the Duke of Argyll were among the few prominent men in England who consistently defended the cause of the North.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE GATHERING STORM

THE first consequence of the election of Lincoln as President was the convening by the Legislature of South Carolina of a specially elected Convention of the State to consider the desirability of secession. This resulted in the passing on 20th December of a definite ordinance of secession. The question then arose what other States would follow in South Carolina's footsteps. Buchanan, as already indicated, was still President. He was in his last months of office. Never possessed of great resolution of character, the fact that he would soon again become a private citizen deprived him of all moral strength to deal with the crisis. No steps were taken by his Government to make clear that in the case of the seceding States the Government would maintain its rights. In the meantime one State after another was withdrawing from the Union, and by February 1861 Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana had

followed the example of South Carolina, and Texas was very shortly to follow suit. The representatives of these States met together at Montgomery in Alabama to found what was called the Confederate States. These States were subsequently joined by Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas ; but definite steps were not taken by them till after the actual commencement of hostilities. By this time the first seceding States had already adopted a provisional constitution much on the lines of the original Union, and Jefferson Davis was duly elected President, with Stephens, one of the most moderate men of the party, who was specially anxious to avoid war, as Vice-President. In his inaugural address the Southern President complained that the South had been driven to separation by wanton aggression on the part of others—a statement which strikes one as singularly inapplicable to the facts of the case. The Southern Congress thereupon resolved to take over all forts and public property generally in the seceded States.

Lincoln left Springfield for the last time on 11th February 1861, and took a touching farewell of his old friends and neighbours.

“ My friends,” he said “ no one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived for a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here

my children have been born and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether I may ever return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

Lincoln may well have felt misgivings as he realised the formidable task that lay before him. It was becoming daily more and more clear that the Southern States would insist on secession, and if the President would not consent to this, it followed that war was inevitable. Lincoln at the same time, as we have seen, was quite unprepared for any compromise. Nor would his Northern followers have listened for a moment to a step involving the disintegration of the Union, however reluctant they might be to taking the final plunge. But if he was confronted, as he said, "with a task greater than that which rested upon Washington," he was to all appearance but little qualified for so grave a responsibility. He had had none of the previous training and experience which might have fitted him for the post. Unlike other members of his Cabinet, he had occupied no prominent responsible position. He had made his name solely as a public speaker and a party leader.

From the point of view of the country generally he was "a dark horse." Seward, in many ways the Republican party's most obvious choice, a man of long political experience and training, had been rejected in his favour. It has been contended by some that the reason for this lay in the fact that on the question of slavery Seward was more likely to go to extremes, and Lincoln was regarded as the more cautious and prudent of the two. Lincoln, however, was a man who had never compromised on a matter of vital principle, and there is every reason to believe that when it came to an issue of peace and war, Seward would have done so. At the final crisis, rather than engage in civil war, Seward actually suggested embroiling his country in a foreign quarrel—a truly desperate means of meeting a desperate emergency.

The rise of Lincoln from the position of a prominent public speaker to that of President was, indeed, unprecedented; yet undoubtedly events had been moving towards such a *dénouement*, and there is little doubt that Lincoln, with his customary far-sightedness, did not fail to realise the fact. He had been, in short, the protagonist in the anti-slavery campaign. He was the one popular figure that overtopped all the others in this great movement. He was, moreover, in spite of the boldness of some of the quoted observations in his speeches, known for the essen-



tial moderation of his attitude. He would have nothing to do with the Abolitionists. He would have nothing to do with any measures which withdrew from the slave-owning States any of the rights which they possessed under the Union. He was not willing even to abolish the Fugitive Slave Law, though he favoured its amendment. He went out of his way to assure the Southern States that they had nothing to fear from his appointment as President. Why, then, it may be asked, did they revolt? Lord Charnwood, in his *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, makes some very interesting observations on this point :—

“It is common,” he says, “to reproach the Southern leaders with reckless folly. They tried to destroy the Union, which they really valued, for the sake of slavery, which they valued more; they in fact destroyed slavery; and they did this, it is said, in alarm at an imaginary danger. This is not a true ground of reproach to them. It is true that the danger to slavery from the election of Lincoln was not immediately pressing. He neither would have done nor could have done more than prevent during his four years of office any new acquisition of territory to the slave-holding interest, and impose his veto on any Bill extending slavery within the existing territory of the Union. His successor after four years might or might not have been like-minded. He did not seem to stand for any overwhelming force in American politics; there was a majority opposed to him in both Houses of Congress; a great majority of the Supreme Court, which might have an important part to play, held views of the Constitution opposed to his; he had been elected by a minority only of the whole American people. Why could

not the Southern States have sat still, secure that no great harm would happen to their institution for the present, and hoping that their former ascendancy would come back to them with the changing fortunes of party strife ? ”

Lord Charnwood replies to these apparently very cogent objections that in the South slavery had come to be regarded as a national and indeed almost a divine institution. The Southerner was determined to hand it down to his children's children. The North had voted slavery to be a crime, and their new President had put the matter without mincing : “ That if slavery was not wrong, nothing was wrong.” It was certain that America would never go back to the position which she occupied before this first explicit national assertion of the wrongfulness of slavery had been made. If the Southern States were not to secede, they must make up their minds to remain the fellow-countrymen of a people who regarded their fundamental institution with “ growing reprobation.” “ Lincoln decided that ‘ this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free.’ Lincoln was right, and so, from their own point of view, that of men not brave or wise enough to take in hand a difficult social reform, were the leaders who declared immediately for secession.”

This doubtless gives clearly enough the point of view of the South. They were not willing to wait for a possible turn of the political pendulum ;

they were not prepared to "wait and see." They had compelled the North to compromise with its convictions time after time, and now that they saw that there was to be no further question of compromise, they, on their part, were determined not to recede. A man who, by force of threats, is able to get his own way again and again, and is suddenly brought up against a point-blank refusal to yield further ground, will generally rather fight than give up his point. With a man who has been met firmly from the first it is otherwise. This was precisely the position where the South was concerned. Each time a concession had been made to them they had grown more determined and more confident in their own standpoint. It was too late for compromise when at length the North said to them, "Hold! enough!" Whether they were right from their own point of view, as Lord Charnwood thinks, it is very difficult to decide.

It is clear that they might have taken another course altogether, which would have prevented the election of Lincoln as President. They might, that is to say, have decided to support Douglas instead of putting up a slavery candidate for the Presidency, thereby dividing the voting power of the Democratic party. Douglas then would almost inevitably have been elected. Had this happened, the Slave States would have certainly been in no worse position than they were under the preceding Presidency of Buchanan. The con-

clusion is forced upon us that if they had been willing to continue anything in the nature of a compromise with the North, they might have done so without any fear of aggressive action against their own interests. They had, it is plain, determined to force matters to an issue, feeling doubtless that compromise was no permanent solution, and that Slave States and Free States could not remain for ever under a single government. The recognition of this attitude of mind on the part of the South was doubtless what prompted Lincoln to say that the Government "could not endure permanently half slave and half free." The crisis, in short, might well have been tided over for the time, and probably for a considerable period ; but it was bound to arrive, and would have to be faced eventually.

Lincoln reached Washington at the end of February, after a journey the latter part of which was rendered noteworthy by the receipt of news of a plot to assassinate both the President himself and other members of his cabinet in passing through Baltimore. In order to avoid the danger, he suddenly and unexpectedly left Harrisburg, where he had been staying the night, in company with Colonel Lamon, and was driven to a special train which was waiting for him on the Pennsylvania Railroad. At the same time the telegraph wires were cut, so that in the event of his departure being discovered, intelligence could not be com-

municated. At 10.30 the train reached Philadelphia, where Lincoln was met by a detective, who had a carriage waiting in which the party were driven to the depot of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railway. They there took berths in a sleeping-car, and passed without change through Baltimore to Washington, where Lincoln arrived at 6.30 one morning at the end of February 1861. He was driven thence to Willard's Hotel, where he found Senator Stuart expecting him, and where he remained until the departure of the outgoing President from the White House.

During all this time, owing to the dominant influence of Southern sympathisers in Buchanan's cabinet, the Northern States were being stripped of arms and ammunition, and quantities of military stores were being sent south, without any interference on the part of the President. Military posts in the Southern States were at the same time being placed under the command of officers hostile to the Union. Lincoln warned General Scott of the situation, and intimated that it might be necessary shortly to take steps to recover such forts on behalf of the Federal Government, pressing him to take such measures as were possible in the meantime to render this practicable. On 4th March 1861, the outgoing President arrived in his carriage to escort his successor to the Capitol, where the Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution

was administered to him by Chief Justice Taney. Here he delivered his inaugural speech as President, while Douglas, his defeated rival, stood by his side taking charge of his hat and cane while he delivered his address. The speech had been drawn up with great care, and every effort had been made to rob it of any appearance of aggressiveness towards the South. Originally written by Lincoln in his customary manner on scraps of paper and the backs of envelopes, it was extensively revised and modified by Seward, whose suggestions were in the main adopted by the President. It set out the position of the Government on the slavery controversy in a manner calculated to avoid arousing any feelings of resentment on the part of the opposition. It strongly emphasized the indissoluble character of the Union, and announced the decision of the Government to maintain this Union in the face of all attempts to undermine it. "The power," said Lincoln, "conferred on me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government and to collect the duties on imports. But beyond what may be necessary for these objects there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." "In your hands," he concluded, "my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assault you. You can have no conflict without



being yourselves the aggressors. . . . The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battle-field and patriot grave to every loving hearth and hearthstone all over this broad land will yet swell the chorus of union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

## CHAPTER IX

### LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET

LINCOLN had for some time past been busily occupied in the construction of his Cabinet, which he was desirous should represent as far as possible all shades of opinion in the new Republican party. Though he had full knowledge of the political antecedents of the men he selected, his personal knowledge of them was limited to not more than three or four. They did not prove in the upshot by any means a happy family, and personal antagonisms and rivalries showed themselves almost from the very first. Among his first selections were his own rivals for the Presidency—Seward, of New York ; Chase, of Ohio ; Bates, of Missouri ; and Cameron, of Pennsylvania. It was most important for Lincoln to secure the adhesion of Seward, who became Secretary of State, and though he was within an ace of withdrawing his acceptance, he proved in the end Lincoln's most loyal and staunch supporter. Between Seward and Chase there was no love lost. Chase

represented the more radical wing of the Cabinet, while Seward represented the more conservative elements. Chase became Secretary of the Treasury, a position for which he was singularly well fitted ; Bates, Attorney - General ; and Cameron, for a time, Secretary for War. To these were subsequently added Caleb Smith, of New York, as Secretary of the Interior ; Gideon Welles, of Connecticut, Secretary of the Navy ; and Montgomery Blair, of Maryland, as Postmaster-General.

Cameron, as already intimated, did not remain long in the Cabinet, his business incapacity rendering his retention impossible. Before the first year of Lincoln's administration had closed, he was replaced by a much abler man, a lawyer of note, in the person of Edwin M. Stanton. Stanton was a Democrat, but strongly anti-slavery. His chief drawback was his violent temper and his overbearing manner towards all and sundry. The stories told of Lincoln's tact in dealing with this very difficult colleague are innumerable. He had already been warned, when he first contemplated Stanton's appointment, of the man's ungovernable temper and the trouble that was likely to arise in the Cabinet in consequence. One of his friends, in protesting against the appointment on these grounds, urged that Stanton, when beside himself with rage, was in the habit of jumping up and down in his excitement. Lincoln replied : " Well, if he gets to jumping too much we will treat him

as they used to treat a minister I knew out West. He would get so excited and wrought up at revival meetings that they had to put bricks in his pockets to keep him down." "But," he added, "I guess we will let Stanton jump awhile first." The difficulties and disputes that arose through the addition of this new member of the Cabinet proved not to have been overestimated; but in Lincoln's view, and doubtless it was a correct one, his efficiency as Secretary for War more than counterbalanced them. He had, however, as little respect for Lincoln himself as for any other member of the Cabinet. On one occasion a committee of Western men, headed by a certain Mr Lovejoy, procured from the President an important order providing for the exchange of Eastern and Western soldiers during the war, with a view to more effective work. This was quite contrary to Stanton's ideas, and he put his foot down emphatically on the new order. The story runs that, armed with the document bearing the President's own signature, Lovejoy betook himself to the Secretary for War, and apprised him of the decision that had been arrived at. It is perhaps hardly to be wondered at that Stanton resented outside interference with the management of his own special department. In any case he was beside himself with rage. On hearing the scheme explained to him he flatly refused to carry it out. "But," remonstrated Lovejoy, "we have the President's

own order." "Did Lincoln give you an order of that kind?" asked Stanton. "He did, sir." "Then," exclaimed the irate Secretary, "he is a damned fool." "Do you mean to say that the President is a damned fool?" exclaimed Lovejoy, in amazement. "Yes, sir," retorted Stanton, "if he gave you such an order as that." The astounded Congressman betook himself at once to the President and narrated the result of his conference, repeating the conversation in detail. "Did Stanton say I was a damned fool?" asked Lincoln, at the close of the recital. "He did, sir, and repeated it." After a moment's pause, the President looked up and said: "If Stanton said I was a damned fool, then I must be one, for he is nearly always right, and he generally says what he means. I will step over and see him."

On one occasion (in 1863) Dennis Hanks, Lincoln's boyhood friend and cousin, called to see him at the White House. His mission brought him in contact with the Secretary for War, who was determined—and apparently quite rightly—not to accede to his request, which had reference to the release of some soldiers who had brought about a riot at Charleston, in which several citizens had met their deaths. Stanton was greatly incensed at Hanks' intervention, and expressed the view that "every damned one of them should be hung." Dennis took away a decidedly unfavourable recollection of the Secretary for War, whom he

described as a "frisky little Yankee with a short coat tail." "I asked Abe," he informed Herndon in confidence, "why he did not kick him out. I told him he was too 'fresh' altogether." Lincoln's answer was: "If I did, Dennis, it would be difficult to find another man to fill his place."

Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, was another member of his Cabinet with whom Lincoln had constant trouble, and for whose behaviour he throughout showed the most uniform forbearance. Lincoln quite rightly had the highest opinion of Chase's financial abilities, but the Secretary to the Treasury had it so firmly fixed in his own mind that he was the most competent member of the Cabinet that it was difficult to retain him in office without constant and continual friction. Chase, in the first instance, was one of the foremost supporters of General M'Clellan, and subsequently was the most bitter of all in his denunciation of his dilatory tactics. He was perhaps the foremost supporter of negro emancipation in the Cabinet, and would have gladly seen the proposal put into force at an earlier date than Lincoln thought prudent. At a later date the critics of the Cabinet found a ready sympathiser in Chase, who was never tired of expressing very decided views as to his own capacity and their incompetence. Finally he entered into an intrigue to supplant Lincoln in the Presidency, in spite of which Lincoln still retained him in office. In reply to his friends who com-



plained of his overlooking the hostile attitude of one of his own colleagues, "I have determined," he said, "to shut my eyes as far as possible to everything of the sort. Mr Chase makes a good Secretary, and I shall keep him where he is. If he becomes President, all right. I hope we may never have a worse man." Eventually his retention as a member of the Cabinet became no longer practicable. He interfered in other people's departments until the President found it impossible to reconcile their differences. Finally he sent in his resignation, fully expecting it to be refused. Lincoln replied in accepting it: "Of all I have said in commendation of your ability and fidelity I have nothing to unsay, yet you and I have reached a point of mutual embarrassment in our official relations which it seems cannot be overcome or longer sustained consistently with the public service." Lincoln's magnanimity towards the man who had so constantly traduced and intrigued against him went so far as to grant him the appointment of Chief Justice when this fell vacant, greatly to the surprise of Chase's friends, who could not believe his unfriendly attitude would have been so readily forgiven. This action was singularly characteristic. Lincoln's failure, indeed, to bear ill-will against those who had done him an injury seemed to many almost to amount to a fault, and it was complained of him, not without some show of justification, that he was more generous to his

enemies than to his friends. Lincoln hoped, in the formation of his Cabinet, to conciliate the largest possible amount of public opinion. In this he was successful, but his selection had the corresponding disadvantage of bringing together a number of men whose views on most political questions were remarkably divergent. This has always been one of the drawbacks of a Coalition Cabinet—the more sections you conciliate, the more internal discord there must be within the circle of the Cabinet. As one who knew Lincoln well (Leonard Swett) observed with regard to him, after his death: “An adhesion of all forces was indispensable to his success, and the success of the country. Hence he husbanded his means with the greatest nicety of calculation. Adhesion was what he wanted. He used every force to the best possible advantage. He never wasted anything, and would always give more to his enemies than he would to his friends. And the reason was that he never had anything to spare, and in the close calculation of attaching the factions to him he counted upon the abstract affection of his friends as an element to be offset against some gift with which he must appease his enemies. . . . In his conduct of the war he acted upon the theory that but one thing was necessary, and that was a united North. He had all shades of sentiments and opinions to deal with, and the consideration was always presented to his mind, ‘How can

I hold these discordant elements together? ' ' ' ' Lincoln's tact and conciliatory demeanour was successful in accomplishing this, and he rightly realised that it was a condition precedent to winning the war. In view of recent discussions as to the number of members required to form an efficient War Cabinet, it will be observed that the number of Lincoln's Cabinet was eight. It was complained to him when he first made his appointments that he included four Democrats and only three Republicans. His reply to this was that he himself was a Republican, and that he "hoped it might be possible for him to be present not infrequently at the Cabinet's deliberations, and thus redress the balance!" One can scarcely believe that even Lincoln's tact would have been equal to the task of efficiently carrying on with a Cabinet of twenty-two, especially if the relations of the remaining fourteen had been as difficult of adjustment as those of the ministers actually appointed.

Of the other members of the Cabinet, Montgomery Blair, of Maryland, the new Postmaster-General, represented the Border State aristocracy, and was one of the founders of the Republican party. He had been solicitor of the Court of Claims under the late President Buchanan, who had removed him from office on account of his opposition to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. He was a useful member of the Cabinet and a staunch supporter of Lincoln himself, and favoured generally

a bold and energetic policy—too bold, frequently, for the President's cautious temper. He had, however, many enemies, and was constantly coming into collision with both Stanton and Seward. He was reluctant to adopt the Emancipation Proclamation, for fear that it would drive the Border States over to the Confederacy, and on this account was one of the members of the Cabinet who stood out against it to the last. In 1864, when the war was drawing to a close, he was anxious to secure a compromise with the South, and being on friendly terms with a number of the leading Southern politicians, believed that the opening of negotiations through his means would lead to some practical result. When his views on this matter became known they led to a measure of alarm on the part of those who realised the danger of an inconclusive peace. President Lincoln allowed Blair to see what he could do in the matter, but gave him no official authority as a negotiator and had no faith in the utility of his mission, which eventually came to nothing. Lincoln doubtless felt that this was the best way of satisfying Blair of the fact that he was labouring under a delusion.

In spite of his quarrels with other members of the Administration, and his suspicions of the motives of many leading members of the Republican party, which he was never tired of insinuating to the President himself, Blair remained a member

of the Cabinet for upwards of three years. He had always assured the President, in view of the disputes with his colleagues, that he would be pleased to resign his position in case the difficulties arising from his retention proved too great an embarrassment to Lincoln. Finally Lincoln felt himself compelled to accept this offer of withdrawal, rather than continue a state of affairs in which constant friction seemed inevitable. In writing to ask him to resign Lincoln observed: "You know very well that this request proceeds from no dissatisfaction of mine with you personally or officially. Your uniform kindness has been unsurpassed by that of any other friend." After his resignation Blair's loyalty to Lincoln continued unabated, and he took the field on his behalf during the campaign for his re-election.

Not the least capable member of the Administration was Gideon Welles, of Connecticut, Secretary of the Navy.

Lincoln first met Gideon Welles in a purely accidental manner, after a speech he had been delivering at Hartford, Connecticut, in the spring of 1860. William Eleroy Curtis<sup>1</sup> narrates the story of their first meeting:

"As he approached his hotel, Lincoln stepped into a bookstall, where a gentleman who had been in his audience the evening before approached and introduced himself. There seemed to be a mutual attraction, and for two hours

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<sup>1</sup> *The True Abraham Lincoln*, p. 196.

they discussed various subjects of interest—politics, law, and literature. The next time they met was after the Chicago Convention, to which Mr Welles was a delegate, and during the Campaign they exchanged frequent letters, until Lincoln was thoroughly convinced of the fitness, availability, and character of the Connecticut lawyer for a position in his Cabinet. The special knowledge of maritime law shown by the latter seems to have suggested his assignment to the Navy Department.”

The Navy played a most important, though for long periods a silent part in the conduct of the war. The eventual effect of the Northern campaign was to cut off the South from its resources, and the command of the sea, which was secured early in the war by the North, necessarily contributed in no small degree to this end. As Lord Charnwood well says: “The subjugation of the South began by a process necessarily slow and much interrupted, whereby, having been blockaded by sea, it was surrounded by land, cut off from its Western territory, and deprived of its main internal lines of communication.” Gideon Welles and his able lieutenant, Fox, deserve no small measure of credit for bringing about this result. Welles himself was a man of great decision of character and executive ability, but his relations with Seward, with whom he came into collision through the latter’s interference in naval affairs, were one more source of constant friction in the Cabinet. In spite of this, both retained their posts until Lincoln’s death.



## CHAPTER X

### THE WAR

THE first news that reached Lincoln immediately after the inauguration was that Fort Sumter, off Charlestown, on the coast of South Carolina, would be forced to capitulate to the Southern forces unless promptly reinforced and revictualled. The majority of the Cabinet were opposed to taking definite steps in the matter. General Scott being questioned on the military position, had given it as his opinion that the fort should be evacuated. The opponents of its retention argued that the blame lay with the outgoing administration, who had not taken steps in time.

Lincoln was most anxious to avoid anything in the nature of provocation. Finally, after some hesitation, he decided to give instructions to revictual the fort, but not to send troops. It was, however, already too late. Beauregard, the Southern general, received orders to reduce the fort, and summoned Anderson, who was in command, to surrender. Anderson, now almost starved out, replied that

unless he received supplies and instructions he would surrender on 15th April. How it happened is not known, whether by accident or through intention to offer definite provocation, but, in spite of Anderson's reply, the Confederate batteries opened fire on 12th April. Fort Sumter became immediately untenable. Anderson capitulated and marched out on Sunday, 14th April, with the honours of war. The South had now definitely assumed the offensive, and in reply to the challenge the North sprang to arms.

It is surely well for the world in general that in certain grave crises of its history the immediate future is hidden by an impenetrable veil. The Northern States when they engaged in the conflict never dreamed of the gravity of the task that lay before them. Many believed that the war would be over in a few short months. Few suspected that it would outlast a year. The idea that it might conceivably endure for four whole years was nowhere entertained as within the bounds of possibility. In this respect there lies a very close parallel between the war between North and South and the great World War of to-day. Would England, one may well ask, have stepped into the breach had the Cabinet of the day realised what was before them? That they would have been well advised to do so in any case there can be no doubt, but that they would have ventured to face so stupendous a task seems in the highest degree

unlikely. In both cases the marked superiority of one side in material resources and in the number of men at their disposal seemed to render impossible any doubt as to the ultimate result. Surprise in each case was felt at the confidence of the enemy in their own power, and, as it seemed, their rashness in defying the heavy odds against them. In both cases these calculations proved to have overlooked vital factors in the situation. At the time of the outbreak of the Civil War in America, the North had more than double the population of the South, and of this Southern population a considerable portion were slaves who, it was known, could not be enlisted. The North, again, was far richer in material resources and soon found itself in a position to drive the Southern fleet from the seas. On the other hand, the objects of the war imposed upon the North a far greater task than devolved upon the South. All the South required to do was to retain and defend its own territory. If the Union were to be maintained, the North must not merely win isolated battles, but must completely subjugate the Southern territory. The South, again, were much better situated with a view to defence than the North. They could operate on interior lines, and the Confederacy could hardly be gravely weakened by the occupation by the North of any important strategic centres.

At the commencement of the war neither side possessed an army of any consequence, the actual

army in the service of the United States as a whole then consisting of only 16,000 officers and men. The armies with which the war was eventually fought out had to be called up and trained while the campaign was in progress. The Southerner, who had lived a more outdoor life than his Northern neighbour, probably took more readily to the pursuit of arms. One factor above all others helped the South for all the first half of the campaign to an extent that can hardly be overestimated, and this was perhaps more due to pure luck than to any more definite cause. While the North was seeking in vain for two long years for someone who might be qualified to command their armies and lead them to victory, the South commenced their campaigns under the generalship of Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson, whose efficiency as commanders in the field was never in doubt or question. Lee, indeed, was opposed to the war from the commencement, and it was only with much reluctance that he sided with the South. Of Lee's pre-eminent military qualifications there can be no doubt, and the late Lord Wolseley was inclined to write them higher than those of Moltke. General Scott, on the other hand, who was put in command of the Northern forces, was obviously from the first too old and infirm for his very arduous duties, and his successor, M'Clellan, on whom the greatest hopes had been placed, in spite of his ample opportunities, did nothing whatever to justify them.

It is hardly open to doubt that Lincoln retained him in command long after his incapacity had become obvious. He laboured, however, under the disadvantage of not knowing who to put in his place, and hesitated to dismiss a man who, at least during the earlier part of the war, had become a sort of popular idol. M'Clellan, indeed, took over the command of the Northern armies amid a burst of popular applause and enthusiasm. He appeared to the man in the street to be the heaven-sent saviour of the popular cause, while in reality possessing nothing more startling than a genius for popularity, a certain capacity for organisation, and a confidence in his own abilities which was far from justified.

On the day after the bombardment of Fort Sumter, Lincoln issued a proclamation calling upon the States of the North to furnish 75,000 men for the suppression of an unlawful combination. So unfitted was the constitution to cope with the situation created by the Civil War, that the law actually did not empower the President to call out the militia, for such it was, for a longer period than three months. This proclamation was, accordingly, shortly followed by another, appealing for volunteers to enlist for three years' service.

The first incident in the war was the Battle of Bull Run, which involved a somewhat serious reverse for the forces of the North. The Southern army, under General Beauregard, lay near Bull

Run River, some twenty miles from Washington, covering the railway junction of Manassas on the line to Richmond, the Southern capital. General Scott was unwilling to attack owing to the unpreparedness of the Northern forces, but there was a very general demand on the part of the North for action to be taken, and the Cabinet was anxious to gain an early victory for political reasons. General Patterson was at this time opposing a Southern force in the Shenandoah Valley. The plan was for M'Dowell to attack the Confederates at Manassas, while Patterson prevented Johnston's army from joining Beauregard. Patterson, however, conspicuously failed to do this. The result was that M'Dowell found himself confronted with the conjoined Southern armies. Both sides of course consisted of untrained levies. The attempt to drive Beauregard from the position he had occupied proved too much for M'Dowell, and in the upshot the Northern soldiers retreated in disorder, and, in fact, in something of a panic. Johnston, however, who now took over the command of the Southern forces, did not feel himself in a position to follow up the results of his victory, and the military consequences of the engagement were not of great practical consequence. It had the effect, however, of rudely shattering the confidence of the North, and in this way had a salutary effect in leading to much more energetic measures than had hitherto been taken. Scott blamed himself bitterly



for consenting to act against his better judgment, and Lincoln himself seems to have felt that the commander was to a great extent responsible for the reverse through declining to insist on his views in a stronger manner. This preliminary engagement was followed by a long period of inactivity on both sides as far as the actual fighting was concerned, both combatants being engaged in organising their respective armies in view of the coming struggle. Neither clearly felt that they were in a position to strike anything in the nature of a decisive blow. The lack of military discipline, as was not surprising under the circumstances, was a grave obstacle on both sides.

Not long after this, in November 1861, General Scott surrendered his command, which was conferred, as above stated, on General M'Clellan. His first and, as it proved in the upshot, his most useful work was the organisation of the army of the North. He certainly showed no anxiety to repeat the blunder of launching into hostilities with untrained troops, and, indeed, rather went to the other extreme, always tending to exaggerate the number of the enemy opposed to him, and fearing to engage them without vastly superior forces. The early part of the following year brought about a recommencement of hostilities, and the Northern arms were generally successful in the West. Kentucky, till now a debatable ground between the two armies, was secured for the cause of the North. The Federal gunboats

pushed up the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers into the State of Kentucky, took Fort Henry, on the 6th February, and, with the aid of the land forces under General Grant, occupied also Fort Donelson, 16th February, capturing some 10,000 prisoners. Following on this, Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, surrendered to the Northern army on the 23rd of the same month.

Further progress was made down the Mississippi, the greater part of Missouri being cleared of the enemy, and the troops of the Union advancing into Arkansas, where a great battle was fought at Pea Ridge, which terminated in the complete rout of the Southern forces. Finally Admiral Farragut, advancing still further south to the mouths of the Mississippi, after six days' bombardment captured New Orleans on 28th April.

Meanwhile, from 21st July 1861 (the date of the battle of Bull Run) to March 1862, the main army of the North continued to remain on the Potomac opposed to the Southern army of Joseph Johnstone, which was drilling at Manassas. Further troops were constantly being sent to reinforce M'Clellan, whose army by October amounted to 147,000 men, whereas Johnstone had barely 47,000 under his command. Johnstone was naturally expecting M'Clellan to attack, and there was danger of his right flank being turned and his railway communications cut. Finally, in February, as his position became too precarious, he retreated unmolested behind the

Rapidan River, thirty miles further south. No attempt whatever was made by M'Clellan to molest him, and great surprise and annoyance was felt in the North that what appeared to be an excellent opportunity had been missed. M'Clellan seems to have been under a total misapprehension as to the forces of the enemy, whose numbers he had enormously exaggerated in his own mind. Lincoln, over and over again, urged him to attack, but all to no purpose. All M'Clellan could be induced to do was to abuse the Government for incompetence, and to demand further reinforcements. On 27th January Lincoln published a general War Order in his capacity of Commander-in-Chief for a forward movement of the army on the Potomac. For a moment M'Clellan made up his mind to carry out Lincoln's instructions, and then changed it again. Finally, a decision was arrived at to land troops at Fort Monroe, which lies at the end of the peninsula that juts out between the estuaries of the York and James Rivers.

On 2nd April M'Clellan himself landed, and the Peninsula Campaign, which it was anticipated would end in the capture of Richmond, was commenced. M'Dowell was retained by Lincoln's orders with a force sufficient for the defence of Washington, greatly, as it appears, to M'Clellan's annoyance. M'Clellan commenced his expedition in command of 100,000 men, and 40,000 more troops were subsequently dispatched to him. After he had been

some two months in the peninsula, making gradual progress, he was unexpectedly attacked by Joseph Johnstone, but defeated him on 31st May. A portion of his army pursued the enemy to within four miles of Richmond, and it was contended that by a rapid movement M'Clellan might have captured the city ; but rapidity of movement was never one of his strong points. Stonewall Jackson was now making a movement with a Southern army which threatened the position of Washington, and Lincoln, who had decided to send M'Dowell to reinforce M'Clellan, felt himself compelled to abandon the idea. M'Clellan's advance on Richmond was, however, slowly progressing. A series of battles took place (26th June to 2nd July) between his forces and those of General Lee, of a somewhat indecisive character. M'Clellan's left wing eventually succeeded in winning a strong position overlooking Richmond, but in the upshot he found his right flank threatened by reinforcements which had reached the Southern army, and came to the conclusion that his position was a perilous one. On 2nd July he withdrew his whole force to Harrison's Landing, some way up the James estuary, having, with the co-operation of the navy, effected a transfer of his base.

M'Clellan now advised Lincoln that in order to capture Richmond he must have further large reinforcements. This meant withdrawing a considerable portion of the army which was defending

Washington. The alternative was retreat. After careful consideration, Lincoln decided to instruct M'Clellan to withdraw altogether from the peninsula. M'Clellan's army was transferred to General Pope, who was in charge of the defence of Washington. Pope himself, now in command of some 150,000 men, pushed forward into Virginia. Opposed to him was Lee, with probably not more than 55,000 men. In face of this vast superiority Lee boldly divided his forces and sent Jackson with one portion of them by a circuitous route to cut Pope's communications with Washington. On 29th-30th August Pope turned on Lee in the ill-omened neighbourhood of Bull Run, and sustained a heavy defeat, in spite of his numerical superiority. Pope himself, abandoning hope, begged to be withdrawn within the defences of the capital, and was relieved of his command. Lincoln now directed M'Clellan to take command. Information accidentally reached M'Clellan of Lee's movements, and had he taken advantage of it, he could have crushed Lee's and Jackson's armies in detail. He was, however, too slow. They were allowed to join forces once more, and the Northern army came up with them near the Antietam Creek, a tributary of the Potomac, some sixty miles north-east of Washington. Battles took place on the 14th and 17th September between the two armies, first at South Mountain and then at Antietam.

In the latter battle both sides lost very heavily,



but the Southern army found themselves compelled to retreat, which they did unmolested into Virginia. Lincoln issued instructions to M'Clellan to follow up this partial success, and cross the Potomac in pursuit. He declined to do so, thus allowing a golden opportunity of striking a decisive blow to pass by, and was thereupon superseded by General Burnside. This change in the command did not, however, turn the tide in favour of the North. Burnside met with a severe reverse before the Confederate works of Fredericksburg on 13th December, and this was followed by a fresh withdrawal of the Northern army beyond the Rappahannock. Sherman, too, met with a grave defeat before Vicksburg on 26th to 29th December. Holly Springs, Mississippi, was surrendered to the Confederates, 19th December, with a vast accumulation of stores ; and General Grant, in consequence, found himself compelled to fall back, being prevented from joining hands, as he had hoped, with General Sherman. Meanwhile General Foster had met with a measure of success in North Carolina, and the battle of Murfreesborough (in Tennessee), after continuing from 31st December to 4th January, resulted in a victory for the Federal arms, General M'Cook, in command of the Southern forces, being compelled to beat a hasty retreat.



## CHAPTER XI

### NEGRO EMANCIPATION—THE TURN OF THE TIDE

WHILE the fortunes of war were thus fluctuating, and while the prospect of a speedy victory for the North was becoming month by month more remote, the agitation for negro emancipation was steadily gaining ground. The President was being constantly beset by deputations and by individual men of influence and repute, who pressed upon him the necessity for a proclamation of emancipation. On the 13th September 1862 he received a deputation on the subject from all the religious denominations in Chicago. Some of the ministers in this deputation even went so far as to assure him that they had authority from heaven to command him, in God's name, to emancipate the slaves. In reply Lincoln told them that he was "approached with the most opposite opinions and advice, and that by religious men who are equally certain that they represent the divine will." He was (he said) sure that either one or other class was mistaken in that belief, and perhaps in some respects both. "I

hope " (he continued) " that it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal his will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it might be supposed He would reveal it directly to me. I do not " (he proceeded) " want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative like the Pope's Bull against the comet. Now, do not misunderstand me because I have mentioned these objections. They indicate difficulties that have thus far prevented me acting in some way such as you desire. I have not decided against a proclamation of liberty to the slaves, but hold the matter under advisement, and I can assure you that the subject is on my mind by day and night more than any other. Whatever shall appear to be God's will, I will do." Lincoln's view was that it was his first duty to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. It was, however, steadily becoming clearer to him that, quite apart from his anxiety to solve the slave problem, the saving of the Union itself necessitated the emancipation of the slaves. The Northern outlook had become darker and darker, and apart from some such action on his part Lincoln was beginning to feel that the situation was a hopeless one. He was determined, in any case, "not to surrender the game leaving any available card unplayed." He did not feel that he was prevented from emancipating the slaves on constitu-

tional grounds, as he took the view that as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy in time of war (a position the President *ipso facto* occupied) he had the right to take any measure which might best ensure the triumph of the Union. As a matter of fact, only a month or two before the Chicago deputation had interviewed him, he had almost decided on this emancipation policy. About the end of July 1862 he called a Cabinet meeting together to deal with this very subject, and submitted to it the original draft of the proposed proclamation. All members of the Cabinet were present except Blair, the Postmaster-General. Lincoln in effect told the Cabinet that he had decided to issue the proclamation, and various suggestions were offered by Cabinet Ministers with regard to alterations and emendations in the wording. While the meeting was being held, Blair came in and opposed the policy suggested, on the ground that it would lead to the Government losing the coming autumn elections. Finally, after everyone else had expressed their views, Secretary Seward spoke as follows :—

“ Mr President, I approve the proclamation, but I question the expediency of its issue at this juncture. The depression of the public mind, consequent upon our repeated reverses, is so great that I fear the effect of so important a step. It may be viewed as the last measure of an exhausted Government—a cry for help ; the Government stretching forth its hands to Ethiopia, instead of

Ethiopia stretching forth her hands to the Government. My idea is that it would be considered our last shriek on the retreat. Now, while I approve the measure, I suggest, sir, that you postpone its issue until you can give it to the country supported by military success, instead of issuing it, as would be the case now, upon the greatest disasters of the war."

Lincoln was impressed by the force of Seward's arguments, and decided to put the draft of the proclamation aside for the time being. When, however, the news reached him of the battle of Antietam, and he realised that this involved the retreat of the Southern forces, he made up his mind to wait no longer. Having finished the second draft of the proclamation, he called the Cabinet together the fifth day after the battle, 22nd September, and, after being duly passed, it was published on the following Monday. The first proclamation was indeed merely an announcement of what was intended, but on the first of January of the following year, 1863, the President signed the further proclamation required to put the preliminary announcement into operation. This proclamation declared that "in virtue of the power vested in him as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing the said rebellion, all persons held as slaves within the States of

Arkansas, Louisiana (thirteen counties excepted), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (the forty-eight counties of Western Virginia and seven others excepted) are and henceforward shall be free, and that the executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognise and maintain the freedom of the said persons." The proclamation further declared that "such persons as were of suitable condition would be received into the army service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in the said service." The President, in concluding his proclamation, invoked "the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favour of Almighty God upon an act sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the situation and the military necessity."

The eventual effect of this proclamation was to enrol no less than 300,000 negroes in the armies of the North. Its immediate effect was in some ways no less noteworthy. The North had been living in constant dread lest the Southern Confederacy should be officially recognised by the European Powers. It was known that the Emperor Napoleon was anxious to do this, and that European nations were hesitating what line to adopt. It was now no longer possible for any European country to dispute the fact that the cause of the North was

the cause of freedom. Nothing during the whole war tended so much to discourage the supporters of the South in England as well as on the Continent, or to put heart into the partisans of the North, who were now in a position to maintain openly that the cause of the Union was the cause of justice and liberty. A special message of congratulation was sent to the President by the cotton workers of Manchester and the North, who had been specially hard hit by the war, warmly congratulating him on the step which he had taken. Lincoln replied in a most appreciative spirit, saying that he well understood that the duty of self-preservation rested solely with the American people, but that he realised also that the favour or disfavour of foreign opinion might have a material influence in enlarging or prolonging the struggle. "It has" (he continued) "been often and steadily represented that the attempt to overthrow this government, which was built upon the foundation of human rights, and to substitute for it one which should rest exclusively on the basis of human slavery, was likely to obtain the favour of Europe. . . . Under the circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism. It is indeed an energetic and reinspiring assurance of the inherent power of truth and of the ultimate and universal triumph of justice, humanity, and freedom."



It is evidence of Lincoln's profound innate religious temperament that he told Chase that he had made a solemn vow that if General Lee were driven back from Pennsylvania he would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slaves. It was in fulfilment of this vow that the proclamation was issued. It will be realised that though this proclamation was a step of the utmost importance, it did not actually abolish slavery. It merely proclaimed the freedom of all the slaves within the States in rebellion against the Union. The larger measure was to come later. To have done more than this by proclamation would have transcended the powers of the President even in time of war. The justification for the step taken was that it was a military necessity.

In the meantime the military situation continued to be far from satisfactory, and the first six months of 1863 saw further reverses to the cause of the Union. Burnside had been relieved of his command of the army of the Potomac after his reverse before Fredericksburg, and was replaced by General Hooker. The change of command failed, however, to change the fortunes of war. Hooker attempted a second advance on Richmond, but only met with new disasters, and in a series of battles at Chancellorsville in the first week of May found himself forced to retreat with a loss of some 18,000 men. General Grant was more successful. About the same date he commenced a new movement, landing

his forces at a point on the Mississippi some sixty-five miles south of Vicksburg, which had long resisted the attacks of the Union forces. From this point he proceeded to march in a northerly direction, compelling the evacuation by the Southern armies of some strong fortifications at Grand Gulf and dispersing the army which, under General Joseph Johnstone, had advanced to relieve the place. This left the city of Jackson, the capital of the State of Mississippi, at the mercy of the Northern general, who took possession of the place with its large stores of supplies and artillery. Advancing further he reached Vicksburg about the middle of May and, after a preliminary unsuccessful attempt to storm the place, proceeded to invest it closely.

The slow progress of the Northern arms was in the meantime breeding grave discontent with the Government generally, and the President in particular. An agitation against the war was started by an old pro-slavery man, Vallandigham of Ohio. Vallandigham was arrested and sentenced to close confinement in a fortress. This, however, only had the effect of leading to an outcry against the Government on the charge of military despotism, which had the support of Governor Seymour of New York. Finally, the President decided to release Vallandigham and have him conducted to within the Confederate lines, the understanding being that he should not return during the war.

To make matters worse, the Democratic party at their State Convention for the nomination of State Governors in Ohio, 11th June, chose Vallandigham as candidate for Governor by an almost unanimous vote. In this same month of June the Federal territory was actually being invaded by the Southern forces under General Lee, who was marching in a north-westerly direction up the Shenandoah Valley. On the 13th of the month his lieutenant, Ewell, drove Milroy from Winchester. On the following day the Confederate forces crossed the Potomac. Hampered by internal discontent, and faced at the same time by military failure, Lincoln was confronted with what threatened to prove the gravest crisis in the war. The tide, however, was already on the point of turning. Hooker's army, now under the command of General Meade, who first comes into prominence at this time, and whose army had been given the slip by General Lee, advanced into Pennsylvania in pursuit of the Southern army, which had already invaded this Northern State. The two armies met at Gettysburg, and after three days' fighting, 1st to 3rd July, the Confederate forces were compelled to retreat, leaving some 14,000 prisoners in Meade's hands. Only one day later, 4th July, Vicksburg, which, as already stated, had been invested by Grant, surrendered unconditionally. The prisoners here taken amounted to upwards of 30,000 in number, besides 220 guns. In the following week Fort

Hudson on the Lower Mississippi surrendered to the Federal armies, with 7000 prisoners and 50 pieces of artillery. The result of this success was that the Northern forces now controlled the whole course of the Mississippi, and the Confederate territory was cut in two. These victories, coming after such a long series of failures and reverses, were acclaimed in the North with general rejoicings. Independence Day, 4th July, was made the occasion of widespread enthusiasm, the news of the surrender of Vicksburg, following the victory of Gettysburg, arriving on the afternoon of that day. The President was serenaded by the delighted populace, when he took the opportunity to point the moral of the occasion by alluding to the Southern rebellion as "an effort to overthrow the principle that all men were created equal," which was the avowed basis of the Declaration of Independence, and which was now threatened by the champions of slavery and the inequality of man. To General Grant Lincoln wrote personally "a grateful acknowledgment for the almost inestimable service he had done to the country." The 6th August was set apart as a day of national thanksgiving for the victories achieved, at what was without doubt the real turning-point of the war.

These great successes of the Northern forces synchronised, curiously enough, with very serious internal disturbances. On the 13th July the carrying out of the Conscription Act was forcibly

resisted in New York, and Mob Law reigned in the city for four days. Negroes were beaten to death. A coloured orphan asylum was sacked and set on fire. The State authorities, who were Democratic in sympathies, stood by without taking any action. Governor Seymour asked for the postponement of the draft—a concession to the mob which the President firmly declined to grant. On 19th August it was carried out without opposition. These riots, however, had exactly the reverse effect to that which their organisers anticipated. A wave of indignation swept over the country against such enemies of the Union. In the following elections Vallandigham was defeated for the Governorship of Ohio by a majority of nearly 100,000. New York was won by the Republicans, and every State except New Jersey endorsed the Government policy. The end, however, of the Federal reverses, was not yet. General Rosecrans had successfully driven the Southern forces under General Bragg through south-eastern Tennessee until he had compelled them on the 9th September to evacuate Chattanooga; while at the same time General Burnside, advancing from the east, entered its capital, Knoxville. Bragg, however, was immediately afterwards reinforced by an army commanded by Longstreet, General Lee's ablest lieutenant. The combined army fell on Bragg, who apparently had not anticipated this move, and inflicted on him a sanguinary defeat.

The Federal armies found themselves shut up in Chattanooga in a perilous position with only scanty supplies. General Grant was hereupon placed in command of the Federal army in Tennessee, whither Sherman was hurried to his support with reinforcements from the Mississippi. The reverse was rapidly retrieved. Grant with his reinforced army moved out to attack Bragg, and drove the Confederates from their positions. At the same time Grainger and Sherman were sent to relieve Burnside at Knoxville. Longstreet, the Southern general, thereupon raised the siege and retreated into Virginia.

Before this latest reverse had been retrieved, 19th November 1863, the President was called upon to speak at the dedication of a national burying-ground on the field of Gettysburg. The few words which he addressed to his audience on this memorable occasion have long been remembered, and afford a typical example of Lincoln's simple and yet singularly moving style of oratory. Of this speech, M. Dusergier de Hauranne, in an appreciative article on President Lincoln in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, written shortly after the President's assassination, observed: "I do not think that modern eloquence has ever produced anything more lofty in tone than the discourse pronounced by Lincoln over the tomb of the soldiers who perished at Gettysburg," and later critics have been unanimous in endorsing this judgment.



“Fourscore and seven years ago” (said Lincoln) “our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that this nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow, this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

The following winter was not favourable to the Northern arms. They were defeated in an expedition into the heart of Florida—one of the principal sources of Confederate supplies. An attempt to surprise Richmond also ended in a reverse, General Kilpatrick actually advancing as far as the second

line of fortifications, two and a half miles outside the city, on 1st March 1864. He was, however, then compelled to withdraw owing to the defeat and capture of a portion of his forces under Colonel Dahlgren. A more serious defeat was suffered by General Banks in the West. Banks was advancing up the valley of the Red River, one of the principal westerly affluents of the Mississippi, when he was encountered by General Kirby Smith, in command of the Southern forces, and compelled to fall back with a loss of 16,000 men. This was followed by the capture of Fort Pillow, on the Mississippi, by the Confederate forces, and a disgraceful massacre of the Northern soldiery, who had been taken prisoners, mostly negroes.

General Grant was now in chief command of all the United States armies, and the President addressed to him on 30th April the following letter :—

“ LIEUT.-GEN. GRANT,—Not expecting to see you before the Spring campaign opens, I wish to express in this way my entire satisfaction with what you have done up to this time, so far as I understand it.

“ The particulars of your plans I neither know nor seek to know. You are vigilant and self-reliant ; and, pleased with this, I wish not to obtrude any restraints and constraints upon you. While I am very anxious that any great disaster or capture of our men in great numbers shall be avoided, I know that these points are less likely to escape your attention than they would be mine. If

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GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT



there be anything wanting which is within my power to give, do not fail to let me know it.

“And now, with a brave army and a just cause, may God sustain you !”

The change of attitude towards his new Commander-in-Chief is not a little noteworthy. While General M'Clellan held command and after, the responsibilities of the military situation weighed heavily upon the President, who felt himself obliged to give constant advice and indeed definite instructions to his Commander-in-Chief on a number of different occasions, going so far as to sketch out plans of campaign and issuing definite orders for the generals' guidance wherever he thought this necessary. The confidence he felt in the judgment and capacity of General Grant, on the other hand, and the friendly relations between them, led to an entirely different line of action. Grant was, in fact, allowed a perfectly free hand, and even when his views did not coincide with those of Lincoln, the President preferred to leave him to use his own discretion and to await the result. In replying to his letter, Grant observed :—

“The confidence you express for the future and satisfaction for the past in my military administration, is acknowledged with pride. It will be my earnest endeavour that you and the country shall not be disappointed. From my first entrance into the Volunteer service of the country to the present day I have never had cause of complaint. I have never expressed or implied a complaint against the administration or the Secretary of War

for throwing any barrier in the way of my prosecuting what appeared to be my duty. Indeed" (he added) "I have been astonished at the readiness with which everything asked for has been yielded without any explanation being asked."

No greater contrast than the above letter could be offered to the endless and querulous complaints made by General M'Clellan against the Army Administration for failing to meet his frequently unreasonable and impossible demands. It must, however, be borne in mind that the forces now at the disposal of the North were infinitely greater than in the earlier period of the campaign, and the same obstacles accordingly did not offer themselves to meeting the requirements of the general in command. The campaign now in preparation was the one destined to bring the war to a successful issue. Grant's plan was to concentrate the vast bulk of the United States forces into two great armies, the object of which would be to strike simultaneous blows from the North and from the South. One of these armies accordingly commenced a renewed march upon Richmond from the North under the command of Grant himself and General Meade. The other, under the command of Sherman, advanced from Chattanooga towards the Atlantic coast and thence northwards.

Grant proceeded to cross the Rapidan, and thereupon advanced into the broken wooded country termed "The Wilderness," where it was impossible



for artillery to manœuvre, and which was admirably adapted for the defensive and harassing tactics of the enemy. In this disadvantageous terrain Grant found himself face to face with Lee's army in full force. There was a stubborn and indecisive engagement on 5th and 6th May 1864, involving great losses to the Southern army, and still heavier to Grant's. Following this, Grant made a movement to the left with a view to outflanking Lee. In this, however, he was not successful, but the movement led to a further destructive battle on 8th to 12th May, in which, again, both sides lost heavily—Grant's army losing some 18,000 men and Lee's probably as many. Lee, however, was compelled to fall back further to a position north of the River Anna. Grant still endeavoured to turn Lee's right, Lee meanwhile manœuvring his army with a view to the protection of Richmond. By the end of the month Grant had arrived at Coldharbour, ten miles north-east of Richmond. He had at the same time sent an expedition under General Butler by sea up the James River, with the object of making a landing south of Richmond, his instructions being to take the fortress of Petersburg, twenty-two miles south of the Southern capital. The expedition, however, proved a failure. The Northern armies under Grant himself suffered a further reverse on 1st to 3rd June, in a frontal attack on Lee's entrenchments, which led finally to his abandonment of the attack. Finding a direct offensive impracticable,

Grant thereupon moved his army across the James River to the neighbourhood of City Point, some miles east of Petersburg.

At the commencement of the summer General Sigel, who was in command in the lower part of the Shenandoah Valley, had marched southwards on Grant's instructions. General Early was detached by Lee to stop his progress. An engagement ensued in which Sigel was defeated. General Hunter was sent out to supersede Sigel, and met with no better success. Early advanced and overwhelmed a smaller force under General Wallace, and on 11th July actually appeared before Washington. He was not, however, in a position to make a serious attack on the capital, and after an assault upon one of the Washington forts withdrew back across the Potomac. Meanwhile, in pursuance of the other portion of Grant's plan of campaign, Sherman proceeded to advance in an easterly direction from Chattanooga, where he found himself opposed by General Joseph Johnstone, whom he succeeded in pushing back along the line of railway towards Atlanta. Johnstone had carefully avoided open engagements. His cautious tactics were, however, not approved by Jefferson Davis, who sent out General Hood to supersede him. The new general promptly gave battle, and suffered a severe defeat before Atlanta, which town he was compelled to evacuate on 2nd September. In the meantime Admiral Farragut, in a naval engagement on 5th

August, possessed himself of the harbour of Mobile with its forts. General Grant now dispatched General Sheridan to put an end to the raids up the Shenandoah Valley, placing him in command of Hunter's army. The consequent military operations led to the defeat of Early at Cedar Creek on 19th October, while the country was devastated by Grant's orders, so that it should be impossible in future for Richmond to draw further supplies from this source, and with a view to preventing further raids in the same direction.

Meanwhile Sherman, with Grant's reluctant consent, had established the headquarters of his army at Atlanta, while he sent General Thomas back into Tennessee where the Southern General Hood was contemplating a diversion. Thomas took up a defensive position behind the fortifications of Nashville, leaving General Schofield to check the enemy's advance, while he himself waited for further reinforcements. An engagement ensued between Schofield and Hood at Franklin, in which Hood's army suffered heavy losses ; as a result Schofield was able to fall back slowly unmolested to Nashville, rejoining Thomas's army. Grant felt great anxiety with regard to Thomas's position and his failure to take more prompt steps to stop the advance of the Southern general. He had, in fact, already sent out instructions to supersede him ; but in the meantime news reached him that in a battle on 15th to 16th December Thomas had fallen upon

Hood's army, completely routing it, capturing on the occasion some 13,000 prisoners.

Sherman's forces were now occupying themselves in systematically devastating the agricultural country of Georgia, which had served as a granary for the Confederate forces. This work of destruction being accomplished, Sherman proceeded to take possession of Savannah on the Atlantic coast, and made preparations to proceed thence on his Northern march. Grant was all this time extending his entrenchments further round the south side of Petersburg, and had seized two out of the three railway lines which converged on that city, thus cutting off the enemy's supplies. The Confederate forces were now almost entirely hemmed in, and desertion was playing havoc in their armies. It was clear that their final defeat could not be indefinitely postponed.

In the meantime Sherman was continuing his march northwards from his headquarters at Savannah. Lee endeavoured to concentrate all available forces against him at Augusta. While appearing to threaten this city on the one hand, and the port of Charleston on the other, Sherman, as a matter of fact, was making preparations for an advance due north on Columbia, the capital of South Carolina. He reached this town on 17th February by forced marches, and thus put an end to the intended concentration of the Southern forces at Augusta. Sherman's march had the effect of

cutting the communications with Charleston, which was hurriedly abandoned, and occupied by the Northern forces on 18th February.

Wilmington was now the only seaport left in possession of the Southern Confederation, and Richmond, cut off from its main arteries of communication, was to a great extent dependent on the supplies which reached it through this quarter in spite of the blockade. An unsuccessful attack had been made by General Butler on Wilmington at the end of December, but this reverse was soon retrieved. Admiral Porter, co-operating with the land forces, effected the capture of Port Fisher at the mouth of Wilmington Harbour. Following this, on the 22nd February, the city itself was stormed by General Schofield, and the last maritime port passed into the hands of the Union forces. It was now Sherman's aim to effect a junction with General Schofield. Johnstone, whose object was to prevent this, had not with him more than some 33,000 men ; and Sherman had probably three times the number. There were, however, a large number of other Confederate troops in Georgia and the Carolinas, and Johnstone counted on getting a fair proportion of these to come to his assistance. An indecisive battle took place between Sherman's army and Johnstone's at Bentonville, Johnstone withdrawing within an entrenched position where Sherman hesitated to attack him. Schofield, however, now arrived on the scene, and Johnstone was forced to

abandon his position. On 23rd March Sherman occupied Goldsborough, having advanced four hundred and twenty-five miles from Savannah during a period of fifty days, in spite of the unfavourable weather conditions at this time of the year. He had now the port of New Berne on his right as a safe base of supplies.

In another field of the war Sheridan, who had remained in winter quarters until 27th February, started once more up the Shenandoah Valley with 10,000 cavalry in pursuit of the remains of Early's forces. These were now dispersed and captured, and having broken up the railway communication to the north-west of Richmond, Sheridan proceeded to join Grant and place his cavalry at his service.

While the war was thus progressing, the President continued to occupy his mind with the question of Negro Emancipation. After issuing his proclamation freeing all slaves in States in arms against the central government, he proceeded in December 1862, in his annual message, to put before Congress a considered policy for dealing with the whole question. What he proposed was a constitutional amendment to be submitted to the people providing that compensation should be given by the Government to any State, whether now in rebellion or not, which should abolish slavery before the year 1900 ; and that all slaves who had acquired their freedom through the chances of war should be granted such freedom in perpetuity, and their owners compen-



sated. Also that Congress should vote money for a scheme for the colonisation of negroes outside the borders of the United States. These moderate proposals on the part of the President were not followed up by Congress. The Democrats in especial were opposed to them. But the situation created by the Emancipation Proclamation was bound to lead to a position which would have to be dealt with, and dealt with on bold lines. It was clear that matters could not remain as they had been in the past. Lincoln himself long viewed with favour the scheme for negro colonisation, realising the difficulties which would eventuate for the United States Government in having to deal with so large and rapidly increasing an emancipated negro population. Bills were introduced into Congress to compensate the States of Missouri and Maryland if they abolished slavery, the popular feeling in these States being strongly in favour of abolition. The majority in both Houses supported these bills, but they were eventually killed by persistent obstruction.

As time went on, the Abolitionist Movement gained steadily in strength. In the autumn of 1864 Maryland passed an amendment to the State Constitution abolishing slavery, and allowing no compensation to the slave-owners. Missouri followed later with a similar measure, while Kentucky and Tennessee started a movement in the same direction. It was clear now which way the current was running, and the Republican Conven-

tion of 1864, in choosing Lincoln as its candidate for re-election to the Presidency, declared in favour of a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery throughout the States. There was little doubt that the next Congress would do this, but Lincoln was anxious that the matter should be taken in hand at once. In his message to Congress in 1864 he urged the advisability of prompt action. An amendment to the constitution necessitated a two-thirds majority. The resolution was passed in the Senate, but its fate in the House of Representatives seemed extremely uncertain till the very last moment. It hung, in short, upon a very few doubtful votes. Lincoln picked out two Democratic Congressmen, who presumably had compromised themselves in some way and stood in wholesome awe of the Presidential authority. He told them in so many words that the gaining of a few votes would secure the passing of the resolution, and that these votes must be gained. He added that he looked to them personally to see that they were secured. His threat had the desired effect, and on 31st January 1865 the resolution was passed in the House of Representatives by the requisite two-thirds majority, the crowd in the galleries breaking out at the announcement of the result into a demonstration of enthusiasm which was long afterwards remembered. The action of Congress required to be subsequently endorsed by twenty-seven out of the thirty-six individual States, and it was not

till December of the same year that this final step was completed. The necessary majority had then been obtained, and slavery in the United States of America was a thing of the past. Lincoln was no longer alive to see this much-desired consummation, but it had been practically assured some months before his death.

Three years later a constitutional amendment was passed forbidding any distinction in the franchise on the ground of race or colour. This amendment evidently went further than Lincoln's own views on the matter, his cautious policy aiming rather at confining the franchise to the better educated and more influential portion of the black population. It was, however, feared that vagrancy laws and other such methods might be put into operation as an indirect means of re-enslaving the negroes in the South, and the defenders of the amendment argued that universal franchise would be the best means to be adopted for their protection.

## CHAPTER XII

### LINCOLN RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT

It has been mentioned that the Republican Party had adopted Lincoln as their candidate for the Presidency, but he was not destined to be elected unopposed. His four years' term of office was due to expire in March 1865, and the election would take place in the preceding November. The reverses to the Federal arms in the early months of 1864 had led to great discontent and dissatisfaction in the North, and it was feared for some time that Lincoln's chances of re-election were by no means encouraging. The Democrats, taking advantage of popular discontent, decided to put forward General M'Clellan ; while the extreme section of Abolitionists nominated General Fremont, who, however, withdrew his candidature before the election. Lincoln formally accepted the nomination on 27th June 1864. Replying to a congratulatory address from the "National Union League," he used an expression in thanking the League, which has since become a household word. "I have not," he said "per-

mitted myself, gentlemen, to conclude that I am the best man in the country, but I am reminded in this connection of a story of an old Dutch farmer who remarked to a companion once that it was best not to swap horses when crossing a stream."

His renomination recalled to the President a curious experience which he had had at the time of his first nomination at the Chicago Convention of 1860, which serves to illustrate the strong vein of superstition in his character. He related the experience at the time of its occurrence to Mr Carpenter, and also to John Hay, his assistant private secretary. "In the afternoon of the day, returning home from down town," he said, "I went upstairs to Mrs Lincoln's sitting-room. Feeling somewhat tired, I lay down upon a couch in the room, directly opposite a bureau, upon which was a looking-glass. As I reclined, my eye fell upon the glass, and I saw distinctly two images of myself, exactly alike, except that one was a little paler than the other. I arose and lay down again, with the same result. It made me quite uncomfortable for a few moments; but some friends coming in, the matter passed out of my mind. The next day, while walking in the street, I was suddenly reminded of the circumstances and a disagreeable sensation was produced by its return. I had never seen anything of the kind before, and did not know what to make of it. I determined to go home and place myself in the same position; and, if the same

effect was produced, I would make up my mind that it was the natural result of some principle of refraction or optics which I did not understand, and dismiss it. I tried the experiment, with the same result ; and, accounting for it on some principle unknown to me, it ceased to trouble me." It is perhaps worth noting that Mrs Lincoln took this at the time as a psychic intimation of her husband's second election to the Presidency.

Following Lincoln's nomination, an attempt was made by the South at a settlement by negotiation, and three Confederate commissioners applied for a safe-conduct to Washington to treat for peace. With parties in the North so disunited, there was no little danger of intrigues being set on foot by these commissioners. At the same time there was obvious risk involved if the President consented to treat with them. If he did so without any stipulation as to the restoration of the Union, he forfeited his title to support as a Union candidate. If, again, he did so without any stipulation as to the abolition of slavery, he would forfeit the entire support of the Abolitionists. Lincoln, moreover, was unwilling to recognise officially the government of Jefferson Davis, as this would give an armed rebellion a status which he had invariably refused to accord it. It was doubtful, again, how far the commissioners' terms would be considered binding by the armed forces of the South, and unless they were in a position to secure the disband-



*[To face page 152.]*



ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN 1864



ing of the Southern army on the acceptance of their terms, negotiations with them would obviously be futile. Lincoln under these circumstances issued a statement which was entirely successful in baffling the intrigue without compromising his own position. It ran as follows :—

“To whom it may concern :—Any proposition which embraces the restoration of peace, the integrity of the whole Union, and the abandonment of slavery, and which comes by and with an authority that can control the armies now at war against the United States, will be received and considered by the Executive Government of the United States, and will be met by liberal terms on substantial and collateral points, and the bearer or bearers thereof shall have safe-conduct both ways.”

It was about this time, as already narrated, that the Confederate army was raiding in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and that Grant met with the serious repulse in his assault of Petersburg on 30th July. In view of the gravity of the situation Lincoln had called for a further levy of five hundred thousand men. His friends endeavoured to dissuade him from doing so, for fear of endangering his electioneering prospects. “As to my re-election,” he replied, “it matters not. We must have the men. If I go down I intend to do so, like the *Cumberland*,<sup>1</sup> with my colours flying.” The President was looking ill and was suffering from

<sup>1</sup> The *Cumberland* was a wooden frigate sunk by the Confederate ironclad *Merrimac* in Hampton Roads.

worry and overwork. His friends were anxious about his condition and urged him to take things more easily. "I cannot work less," he replied. "But it is not that. Work never troubled me. Personally I care nothing about a re-election; but if our divisions defeat us, I fear for the country." He said again that he had faith in the ultimate triumph of the North, but added, "I may never live to see it. I feel a presentiment that I shall not outlast the rebellion. When it is over my work will be done."

Before the Presidential election took place, the tide had turned once more and finally in favour of the North. Lincoln had now no longer any real anxiety as regards his re-election. He was, in fact, returned by the votes of all the loyal States except three, and by a larger popular majority than had ever yet been given in a contested Presidential election. He received a triumphant ovation on the occasion, and replied to his enthusiastic supporters in the following memorable words :—

"It has long been a grave question whether any Government, not too strong for the liberties of the people, can be strong enough to maintain its own existence in great emergencies. On this point the present rebellion has brought our Republic to a severe test; and the Presidential elections occurring in regular course during the rebellion added not a little to the strain. If the loyal people united were put to the utmost of their strength by the rebellion, must they not fall when divided and partially paralysed by a political war among themselves ?

But the election was a necessity. We cannot have a free government without elections ; and if a rebellion could force us to forego or postpone a national election, it might fairly claim to have already conquered us. . . . But the rebellion continues ; and now that the election is over, may not all having a common interest reunite in a common effort to save our common country ? For my own part, I have striven and shall strive to avoid placing any obstructions in the way. So long as I have been here I have not willingly planted a thorn for any man's bosom. While I am duly sensible to the high compliment of a re-election, and duly grateful to Almighty God for having directed our countrymen to right conclusions, as I think, for their good, it adds nothing to my satisfaction that any other man may be disappointed by the result. May I ask those who have differed with me to join with me in this same spirit to those who have not ? And now let me close by asking three hearty cheers for our brave soldiers and seamen, and their gallant and skilful commanders."

The raising of the respective armies of the North and South had proved a very serious matter to a country not accustomed to military service. The resources of the South were necessarily much smaller than those of the North, and compulsion had accordingly to be resorted to at a much earlier date. The Southern Government granted the necessary powers in April 1862, about one year after the commencement of hostilities. The Conscription Act in the North did not become law till March 1863, and even so the percentage of men enrolled under this Act was remarkably small, though it

proved a very efficient incentive to voluntary enlistment. There were in arms at the end of the war in the Northern army 980,000 white soldiers, and something like 300,000 black. Before conscription was put into force the Northern army had already reached the total of 860,000, but it was found impossible to make good the constant wastage of war. At one period in the war, curiously enough at the very time that the South was adopting conscription, recruiting was suddenly stopped in the North, the reason apparently being the congestion of the War Department and the fact that recruits presented themselves faster than they could be organised and equipped. During the latter part of the war the numbers in arms in the North were immensely greater than those in the South, and the Southern armies in consequence constantly found themselves confronted with very greatly superior forces. In the original measure of compulsion in the South the liability to serve was limited to the ages of eighteen to thirty-five. This was extended in September 1862 to eighteen to forty-five, and finally in February 1864 to all between seventeen and fifty. The Northern Conscription Act placed the recruiting organisation under the control of General J. B. Fry, as Provost-Marshal-General. The country was divided into a number of districts and sub-districts, and authority was given to enroll all male citizens between twenty and forty-five. Each district, however, was merely



required to provide its special quota, and if it could do this without the aid of compulsion, the Conscription Act was not put into force. Conscripts were chosen by lot from those liable to serve, but those chosen were at liberty to find substitutes if they could do so, the price of a substitute, generally speaking, amounting to about a thousand dollars. Provision was made to safeguard such as could not pay this price, the arrangement being that a substitute should be found for them for three hundred dollars. It stands to reason, however, that there must have been many conscripts who would not be in a position to find this sum. This method of conscription has of course been very widely adopted in the past, but was rejected in the great war of to-day on account of its very obvious unfairness to the poorer citizens. It was, however, the traditional method, and evidently Lincoln did not see his way to substitute anything of a more efficient and at the same time juster character. The number of men actually conscripted in the North was comparatively small, and the main use of conscription was in reality as a threat to stimulate voluntary enlistment.

The re-election of Lincoln as President and their reverses in the field brought home to the South the fact that it was high time to make peace. Jefferson Davis, however, was not prepared to accept the only possible terms. At the same time he was anxious to try if it would not be possible

to secure peace on some more favourable conditions. With this view he dispatched Vice-President Stephens, who had always been at heart opposed to the war, and two other Southern leaders, who were instructed to go to Grant's headquarters and make an appeal through the commander in the field, which would induce Lincoln to consent to see them, and open negotiations. Lincoln was unwilling, but finally, at Grant's express desire, consented to see the commissioners, and make clear to them the only terms on which the South could have peace. He accordingly went, taking Seward with him, and met the three commissioners on a ship at Hampton Roads on 3rd February. They were clearly told that the Union must be accepted in the most unqualified manner, and also advised of the constitutional amendment which Congress had submitted to the people on the subject of slavery, and which it must be understood would not be opposed. The attempt of the commissioners to whittle down these terms met with no sort of success; and as it was clear that Jefferson Davis was not prepared to accept them, the Conference, as Lincoln anticipated, led to no result. The commissioners were, however, informed that while Lincoln could make no promise as regards amnesty for rebels, the executive power which lay in his hands would be used in the interests of clemency. "I understand, then," Stephens said, "that you regard us as rebels who are liable to be

hung for treason." Lincoln replied that that was the case. "Well," said Stephens, "to tell you the truth, we are none of us much afraid of being hanged with you as President."

Lincoln now took office for the second time as President of the United States, and delivered his second inaugural address. Never has any great public pronouncement on a momentous occasion of history breathed so deep a religious feeling. Lincoln was indeed one of the only great public men in history who could make use of Biblical phraseology in public life without the slightest suspicion of insincerity. Everything he said in public or private was so stamped with his own natural earnestness and the intensity of his convictions, that words which would have rung false from the lips of any other statesman only served, when used by him, to add a note of greater solemnity and sense of responsibility to the address.

"Fellow-countrymen!" (he said)—"At this second appearance to take the oath of the Presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the energies and engrosses the attention of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust,

reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

“On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

“One-eighth of the whole population were coloured slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localised in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither expected that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayer of both could not be answered—that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty

has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offence cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of these offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—ferverently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE END

LINCOLN now left Washington at Grant's desire, and proceeded to headquarters. Sheridan was already with Grant, and Sherman joined them shortly afterwards. Meanwhile Lee made overtures with a view to a conference which Lincoln instructed Grant to refuse except on the terms of unconditional surrender.

Lee's defences were now extended some forty miles around Richmond and Petersburg. On April 1st Sheridan, passing to the south of these lines, in a battle at Five Forks, established himself in possession of the railway running west from Petersburg. Grant's army proceeded to deliver assaults at various points to the east of the Petersburg defences. On 2nd April the Confederate Government left the capital, and Lee evacuated Richmond, which had become no longer tenable, on the next day. Jefferson Davis took refuge with Johnstone's army. Johnstone told him frankly that further resistance was impossible, and obtained



his permission to treat with Sherman, the President himself escaping South. Lee now aimed at joining hands with Johnstone, but the Northern cavalry headed him off and destroyed the railway lines on his route, cutting off his supplies. A running fight followed, culminating in a battle on 6th April at Sailor's Creek. Driven back thence, the Southern general found himself surrounded beyond any possibility of escape at Appomattox Court House. A meeting was arranged between himself and Grant and their respective staffs in a neighbouring farmhouse. Lee inquired on what terms Grant would accept surrender. Grant gave permission for every Southern officer to keep his sword and his horse, and subsequently accorded permission, on Lee's solicitation, for the cavalry troopers also to retain their horses. A general indemnity against the charge of treason was also granted to the Confederate officers. Lincoln returned to Washington and met with an ovation at the White House on 11th April, where he addressed the crowd on the problem of reconstruction in the South. On the Good Friday following, 14th April, the Union flag was once more hoisted at Fort Sumter by its old defender, General Anderson, on the anniversary of the day on which it had been hauled down four years before ; and on the same morning a Cabinet Council took place at Washington and discussed the problem of reconstruction.

Lincoln, on the same day, also saw General Grant, who expressed some anxiety concerning the situation of General Sherman, from whom he had heard nothing for some days. Lincoln told Grant that he was convinced that some good news was coming from Sherman, and proceeded to narrate a dream which he had had on the previous night, and which he declared had always come to him on the eve of momentous news. In this dream he found himself on board a curiously built vessel which was drifting rapidly towards a dark and undefined shore. He said that he had had this dream before several of the Northern victories. He had dreamt it before Antietam, before Murfreesborough, and also before Vicksburg. General Grant commented that the battle of Antietam had not resulted in a victory; but the President took no notice of this comment and continued to describe his dream in more detail, and the sensations which accompanied it, insisting that he was sure that it referred to Sherman's victory, as he could think of no other important event to which it might relate. As a matter of fact, on the same morning Sherman had received and replied to a letter from Johnstone opening negotiations for a peaceful surrender, which was completed twelve days later.

On the fateful day Mr and Mrs Lincoln drove out together, and the President seemed in a particularly cheerful mood. Mrs Lincoln had arranged

for a party at the Ford Theatre that night and insisted on the President being one of the party, though he himself was reluctant, as he had already seen the play, *Our American Cousin*, before, and did not care to go to it again. He, however, gave way to his wife's importunity, humorously remarking, when he found that further protest was useless, "All right, Mary, I'll go ; but if I don't go down to history as the martyr President, I miss my guess." The Grants were to have been of the party, but General Grant changed his mind at the last moment, and left Washington the same day. They were, however, accompanied by Major Rathbone, a young officer, and his fiancée. The theatre was crowded, and the President was enthusiastically cheered. At about a quarter past ten John Wilkes Booth, the actor, passed along the passage behind the spectators, showing a card to the attendant, and entered the vestibule of the President's box. Closing the door behind him and entering by the door of the box itself, which was left open, as the President was leaning forward he shot him with a small pistol through the back of the head. Lincoln fell forward immediately, and made no further movement. Major Rathbone jumped up and seized Booth, who turned to attack him with a dagger which he carried in his left hand, and escaped from his grasp. He then rushed to the front shouting the words of the Virginian motto, "*Sic semper tyrannis*," and leaped

upon the stage. The spur, however, which he was wearing caught in the Stars and Stripes banner which was displayed for the occasion, and he fell, breaking his leg. In spite of this, he jumped up again and succeeded in making his escape to the door of the theatre, where he mounted a horse which was waiting for him. Eventually he was pursued and tracked down to a barn, which was set on fire by the soldiers in pursuit of him, and shot dead as he emerged from the flames.

On the same night another of the conspirators gained entrance to Seward's house, wounding three people, including Seward himself, who was lying in bed from the effects of an accident. All, however, subsequently recovered. The President himself never regained consciousness, and at 7.20 on the following morning passed peacefully away. Two of Lincoln's sons survived him—one of the two destined later to become ambassador to this country. The third, Willie, who was described as "the chartered libertine of the White House," died during the war, to the intense grief of his parents, who were devoted to him. This blow, the President himself confessed, overwhelmed him. Lincoln on one occasion, after reading to his aide-de-camp, Colonel Cannon, the lines from Shakespeare's *King John* :

"Father Cardinal, I have heard you say  
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven.  
If that be true, I shall see my boy again,"

turned to Cannon saying: "Colonel! Did you ever dream of a lost friend, and feel that you were holding conversation with that friend, and yet have a sad consciousness that it was not a reality? Just so I dream of my boy, Willie." Overcome with emotion, he dropped his head on the table and burst into tears. One likes to think that the boy he loved so well was waiting to welcome the President on the other side of the Great Divide.

No one who ever rose to the position of Chief Magistrate of a great State was more entirely free from self-consciousness, or what is colloquially termed "side," than Lincoln. He loved to be considered as one of the plain people from among whom he had sprung. Of dignity in the strictest sense of the word he had none. He was hail-fellow-well-met with all, and always preferred to be addressed as "Mr Lincoln" rather than as "Mr President" during his term of office. His tendency, specially in the early part of his life, was consistently to underestimate his own abilities, and, as so many people will always take a man at his own valuation, this doubtless had an effect detrimental to a widespread recognition of his actual capacity and intellectual power.

Another and most striking trait in the character of the great American President was his humanity. I think one may safely say that no man who was responsible for the conduct of a great war, since the world began, was ever so humane by nature



as Lincoln. The clemency of Julius Cæsar to his enemies when they fell into his power became proverbial, but Julius Cæsar's clemency was not comparable with Lincoln's. His official position devolved upon the President the duty of countersigning the orders for the shooting of deserters from the army, and various other delinquents, under martial law. Lincoln always endeavoured to find some excuse for letting the offenders off. The stories told of this trait in his character are absolutely legion. On one occasion a Congressman who had failed to move the Secretary for War to grant a pardon, went to the White House late at night after the President had retired, and forcing his way into his bedroom, earnestly pleaded for his interference, exclaiming tragically, "This man must not be shot, Mr Lincoln." "Well," said the President coolly, "I do not believe shooting will do him any good," and the pardon was granted. This reminds us by contrast of the story of a very dour Scotch judge to whom a man who had been condemned for murder appealed piteously at the conclusion of the trial, protesting in vain that he was absolutely innocent of the crime of which he had been found guilty. "Weel, weel," said the Scottish dignitary, waiving aside the whole question of guilt or innocence, "ye'll be nane the waur for a wee bit hanging."

On another occasion an old man came to Lincoln with a tragic story. His son had been convicted



of unpardonable crimes and sentenced to death ; but he was an only son, and the President said kindly : “ I am sorry I can do nothing for you. Listen to this telegram I received from General Butler yesterday : ‘ President Lincoln. I pray you not to interfere with the courts martial of the Army. You will destroy all discipline among our soldiers.—B. F. Butler.’ ” Lincoln watched the old man’s grief for a minute, and then exclaimed, “ By Jingo ! Butler or no Butler, here goes ! ” Writing a few words he handed the paper to the old man, which read as follows : “ Job Smith is not to be shot until further orders from me.—Abraham Lincoln.” “ Why,” said the old man sadly, “ I thought it was a pardon. You may order him to be shot next week.” “ My old friend,” replied the President, “ I see you are not very well acquainted with me. If your son never dies till orders come from me to shoot him, he will live to be a great deal older than Methuselah.” It is small wonder that Lincoln’s generals felt no little anxiety as to the effect his humanitarian doctrines might exercise upon army discipline.

In the realm of diplomacy Lincoln, immediately after his arrival at the White House, showed himself a past master, to the great surprise of all his subordinates, who wondered how it was that a man who had had so little natural training could prove so adept in dealing with complicated matters of administration and negotiations with foreign Powers.

At a quite early date during his first tenure of office he found himself face to face with a very embarrassing situation in respect of the relations of the United States with more than one European country, owing to the claim of the Southern Confederacy to be recognised as a nation. The position grew more difficult still later on, when it became the generally accepted opinion in Europe that the South would be able to enforce its claim to independence. On 28th February 1861, in the last days of the outgoing administration, Jeremiah Black, Secretary of State, had issued a circular instructing the representatives of the United States at foreign capitals that the Government had not relinquished its constitutional jurisdiction anywhere within its territory and did not propose to do so. He also gave instructions in the same circular that a recognition of the Confederacy must not be allowed. Upon assuming the duties of Secretary of State, Seward confirmed these instructions, expressing the confidence of the President in the speedy suppression of the rebellion. The answers he received from the European Powers were cautious and non-committal. England and France issued a proclamation of neutrality which conceded to the Confederate States the privileges of a belligerent Power. Seward, in reply to this, drew up a vehement dispatch which threatened to embroil the relations of England and America. Lincoln, however, had instructed his subordinates on no account to send off important dispatches with-

out his supervision, and on the dispatch being submitted to him, made such modifications as completely altered the tone and manner of the communication without detracting from the firm line adopted. He, moreover, left it to the American representative, Adams, to use his discretion as to whether he should read the whole dispatch to Lord John Russell, or convey its sense to him in what manner he thought best. Lord Charnwood observes: "Probably his few pen strokes made peaceful relations easy when Seward's dispatch would have made them almost impossible. Certainly a study of this document will prove both his strange untutored diplomatic skill, and the general soundness of his views on foreign affairs."

Further trouble arose with England through the action of a captain of the Northern navy who overhauled *The Trent* and carried off two emissaries who were being dispatched to England and France on behalf of the Confederate Government, subsequently releasing the vessel. This was a violation of recognised international law, and the British Government demanded the release of the prisoners. Unfortunately, Welles, the Naval Secretary, approved the sea-captain's action, and the House of Representatives confirmed this approval. Lincoln realised that the prisoners would have to be given up, and that indeed America herself had adopted an attitude in the past which was directly at variance with her present position. The matter aroused

heated debates in the American Cabinet, and exactly what occurred there is somewhat obscure ; but in the end the only decision consistent with common sense was adopted, and Mason and Slidell, the two emissaries concerned, were given up.

When the question arose of the recognition of the South as an independent Republic, the British Government consistently refused to act in this sense, though there was a time when the fortunes of the North were at their lowest ebb, when the Cabinet hesitated as to what was the wisest course to pursue. Disraeli, however, then leader of the Opposition, whom they consulted in the matter, would have nothing to do with such recognition, and his opinion prevailed, in spite of the desire of Napoleon III. (who had his own schemes afoot for founding an empire in Mexico) to induce England to commit herself. British sympathy was, however, in the main strongly on the side of the South, with certain notable exceptions. After Lincoln's proclamation of the Emancipation of the Slaves was issued, opinion in many quarters veered round to the side of the North, and thenceforward there could be no question of intervention. The stroke was thus one which apart from its influence on the internal conduct of the war, was highly favourable to the North in ridding it of embarrassment in its foreign relations.

We are, most of us, strange mixtures of strength and weakness, but in the case of no great man were

strong and weak points blended more remarkably than in Abraham Lincoln. He himself constantly pleaded guilty to an inability to say "No," and expressed thankfulness on this account that he had not been born a woman. In his home life he yielded in almost everything. His relations with women before his marriage argued a certain irresolution and lack of grit and moral fibre. And yet, where essential principles were at stake, there was no one in the whole country who was so immovable. Once he had made up his mind that a certain course was right, and that it was his duty to pursue it, wild horses (as the colloquial phrase goes) would not drag him from his decision. So it was that in the matter of all that was at hazard in connection with the maintenance of the Union, and the attitude to be adopted towards the slavery dispute, he appeared to be the one strong man in a party where all others were in danger of compromising on the most vital principles at issue. Lincoln was certainly slow at arriving at his conclusions, and we shall probably be right in attributing his irresolution on many occasions to his inability to arrive at a definite decision with sufficient promptitude. He was always accustomed to weigh the pros and cons of any question of policy with scrupulous fairness, and this led at times to a certain inability to see on which side the balance of advantage lay.

Much ink has been wasted in a discussion of what



were Lincoln's precise religious opinions. While some biographers have held him up as a noble example of the orthodox Christian, others, like Herndon, his partner, have bluntly pronounced him an "infidel." The truth is, of course, that both statements are equally false, and indeed, equally absurd. Of theology, properly speaking, he took no account whatever. He frankly avowed his belief that theological disputation was the enemy of all true religion. His early life had brought him into conflict with the orthodox parson of the day, and he had learned to gauge him at his true value. But there was perhaps no one in the whole of the United States to whom genuine religion was more part and parcel of his everyday life. As President, his deeply religious nature came out again and again in his speeches, and I think it may be safely maintained that during the last century there has been one man, and one only, to compare with him, among all those who have been called upon to rule the destinies of great nations, in the profound depth of his religious convictions. Regarded from this standpoint, Abraham Lincoln and William Ewart Gladstone stand apart. And this, in spite of the fact that whereas Gladstone was an enthusiastic theologian, Lincoln had no theological interests. It is doubtless the case that in his later life Lincoln's natural religious tendencies became accentuated. As his biographers, Nicolay and Hay, state in their life of the President: "The pressure of the tre-



mendous problems by which he was surrounded ; the awful moral significance of the conflict of which he was the chief combatant ; the overwhelming sense of personal responsibility which never left him for an hour—all contributed to produce in a temperament naturally serious and predisposed to a spiritual view of life and conduct, a sense of reverent acceptance of the guidance of a superior Power.”

When the New School Presbyterians in 1863 embodied their sentiments of loyalty to the Union in a Memorial to the President, he observed in the course of his reply : “ From the beginning I saw that the issues of our great struggle depended upon Divine interposition and favour.” Again, on another occasion, a clergyman from Central New York called upon him on behalf of his congregation, and assured him that “ the loyal people of the North are sustaining you and will continue to do so,” adding, “ We are giving you all that we have—the lives of our sons, as well as our confidence and our prayers. You must know that no pious father or mother ever kneels in prayer these days without asking God to give you strength and wisdom.” It is narrated that the tears filled Lincoln’s eyes as he thanked his visitor and said, “ But for those prayers I should have faltered and perhaps failed long ago. Tell every father and mother you know to keep praying, and I will keep on fighting, for I am sure that God is on our side.”

It would be possible to continue citing such

instances indefinitely. The point, however, is that this profoundly serious and religious sense was representative of Lincoln's normal attitude towards the duties he was called upon to discharge, and was part and parcel of that high sense of responsibility which carried him through unexampled difficulties and disheartening reverses to the triumphant issue of the work which he had to perform. He did everything, in short, in the time-honoured old Miltonian phrase, "as in the great Taskmaster's eye."

It is not to be wondered at that a man who had so deep a realisation of the spiritual side of life should have had his own strange experiences of the psychic forces ever present around us.

Of this the present narrative has already given several instances. Lincoln even went so far as to dabble in Spiritualism. His mind was an open one, and he brought all experiences of this nature to the test of his own shrewd common sense. On one occasion he invited a celebrated medium to display his powers at the White House, when several members of the Cabinet were present, and on other occasions it is recorded of him that he consulted a clairvoyante in times of political stress and difficulty.

Allusion has already been made to the premonition which constantly haunted him, that he was destined not to outlive the Civil War. He alluded to this conviction on many occasions, though the thought of his impending doom seemed to have left

him in the last weeks of his life, when victory was clearly imminent. The strange dream which he had on the night before his assassination has already been noted, but it is curious that an Englishwoman, not an American, dreamed of the tragedy itself within a few hours of the time of its occurrence.

On the morning following President Lincoln's death, the wife of John Morrison Davidson, the well-known leader-writer for the Liberal press, had a trance, and on recovering from it told her husband that she had seen a man shoot at Lincoln in some theatre or opera-house, and rush out shouting words which she was unable to distinguish. In the course of the afternoon the news of the death reached London. A somewhat similar incident is recorded in connection with the assassination of Mr Percival in the House of Commons, but in this case the warning dream preceded the event by some days. It may be mentioned that Mrs Davidson was subject to trances.

Of the position that Lincoln's name will eventually occupy on the scroll of fame, historians are somewhat undecided. Of the nobility of his character and of his transparent sincerity and integrity there can be no possible doubt, and his tact and political sagacity were unique; but as regards his genius and ability as a statesman there is still room for two opinions. A man, it is argued, of a different mould and of a more ruthless and sterner nature might have brought the war to an end at an earlier date.

It is scarcely to be doubted that Lincoln erred on the side of tolerance towards both his incompetent generals and his recalcitrant cabinet ministers. His patience, indeed, was almost inexhaustible ; and his kindness of heart proved more than once a source of weakness to him in his political career. Both generals and cabinet ministers took advantage of this. General M'Clellan was insubordinate to the point of insolence, and there were those in his Cabinet who openly intrigued against him and strove to undermine his influence, confident in the leniency of the President. It must be remembered, on the other hand, that he found himself in the position of First Magistrate of a divided nation, without practical political experience, and as the representative of a party which had but recently come into existence. The crisis in which he found the country limited his choice of ministers, and those who were obviously indicated as entitled to portfolios by the circumstances of the case, able and brilliant as indeed many of them were, were hardly men either qualified to work harmoniously together or to deal wisely with so grave an emergency, apart from the constant control and guidance of their Chief.

All writers are agreed as to the remarkable effect produced by Lincoln's personal appearance—by the originality of his manner, his angular features, and his long limbs hanging loosely in his ill-fitting clothes, and the strange ungainliness of his figure.

He stood six feet four inches in his socks, and was not a little proud of his gigantic stature. Men called him ugly, but his ugliness was of an impressive kind. In commencing to speak, his audience was struck by something that almost jarred in the harshness of his voice ; but it inevitably arrested their attention, and the unpleasant impression was soon lost, owing to the fascination and homely force of his oratory. His humour was of the broadest kind, and his stories, reminiscent of the early backwoodsman's life, at times caused offence among the more sober-minded members of the community. This humour found vent on the most trifling as well as the most serious occasions. Here is one such story that illustrates the simplicity of his habits. On one occasion a visitor called to see him at the White House, and was told that the President was downstairs. He walked down to the basement, and found Lincoln cleaning his boots. " You do not mean to say that you clean your own boots, Mr President ! " exclaimed his visitor in horror. " Whose boots did you suppose I was cleaning ? " the President inquired innocently.

The story of his reply to the temperance deputation who complained of General Grant because he drank so much whisky is well known. Could his informers not let him know the name of the special brand that Grant drank, as in that case he would send a consignment to each of his other



generals ? It is curious to note that Lincoln, himself a teetotaller and a non-smoker, was frequently pestered by temperance cranks and temperance deputations ; one of these deputations attributed the reverses of the North to the fact that the soldiers drank so much whisky. This, retorted Lincoln, was, he felt, most unfair, as he had it on the best authority that the Southern troops drank more whisky and of a worse quality than their Northern antagonists.

The Abolitionists were constantly pressing Lincoln to issue his proclamation of Emancipation before, as it seemed to him, the psychological moment for such a step had arrived. Among those who were most untiring in their importunity in this direction were three Radical members of the party, of the names of Sumner, Stevens, and Wilson. Lincoln complained to his friend Senator Henderson that wherever he went, and wherever he turned, they were on his trail. Looking out of the window at this moment he espied them in the distance, and proceeded to tell a characteristic story in illustration of the situation. "The only schooling I ever had, Henderson," he remarked, "was in a log school-house, where reading-books and grammars were unknown. All our reading was done from the Scriptures, and we stood up in a long line and read in turn from the Bible. On one occasion the chapter was that dealing with the casting of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into



the fiery furnace. A little boy was set on to read for whom the Biblical names proved altogether too tough a morsel. He stumbled on Shadrach, floundered on Meshach, and went all to pieces on Abednego. Instantly the hand of the master dealt him a cuff on the side of the head, and left him blubbering as the next boy took up the reading. He finally subsided, and his blunder was forgotten by the others of the class until his turn came round again. Then, like a thunderclap out of a clear sky, he set up a wail which quite alarmed the master, who inquired with unwonted gentleness, 'What's the matter now?' Pointing with a shaking finger at a verse which a few moments later would fall to him to read, the little boy managed to quaver the answer: 'Look there, master, there comes them same damn three fellers again.' " Then Lincoln's face lighted up with a smile such as only he could give, and he beckoned Senator Henderson to his side, silently pointing his long bony finger to three men who were just then crossing Pennsylvania Avenue towards the White House. They were Sumner, Wilson, and Thaddeus Stevens.<sup>1</sup>

The above story is peculiarly characteristic of Lincoln's special type of humour. He delighted in finding parallels of a grotesque kind, and was never so happy as when introducing an apposite illustration for the purpose of the occasion from his

<sup>1</sup> *Lincoln's Own Stories.* Harper & Bros.

almost inexhaustible fund of anecdotes. Nothing is more subtle or more difficult to analyse than humour. Lincoln's wit found its vent in a form of comic comparison and caricature which was part and parcel of his unique and singularly original mentality.

In some sense Lincoln may be described as having been, in the Latin phrase, *Felix opportunitate mortis*. From the point of view of the South, however, this was far from being the case. John Wilkes Booth's mad act proved indeed to be, as Disraeli would have said, "worse than a crime, a blunder." For his successor lacked those qualities with which Lincoln was so conspicuously endowed, and which were so calculated to heal the wounds caused by the war. Andrew Johnson was the last man fitted by temperament to deal diplomatically and prudently with the problem with which he found himself confronted on Lincoln's death, and none had more reason than the champions of the South to regret the tragedy which caused the end of the war to coincide with the death of the great protagonist of the Union and of the cause of Freedom.







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